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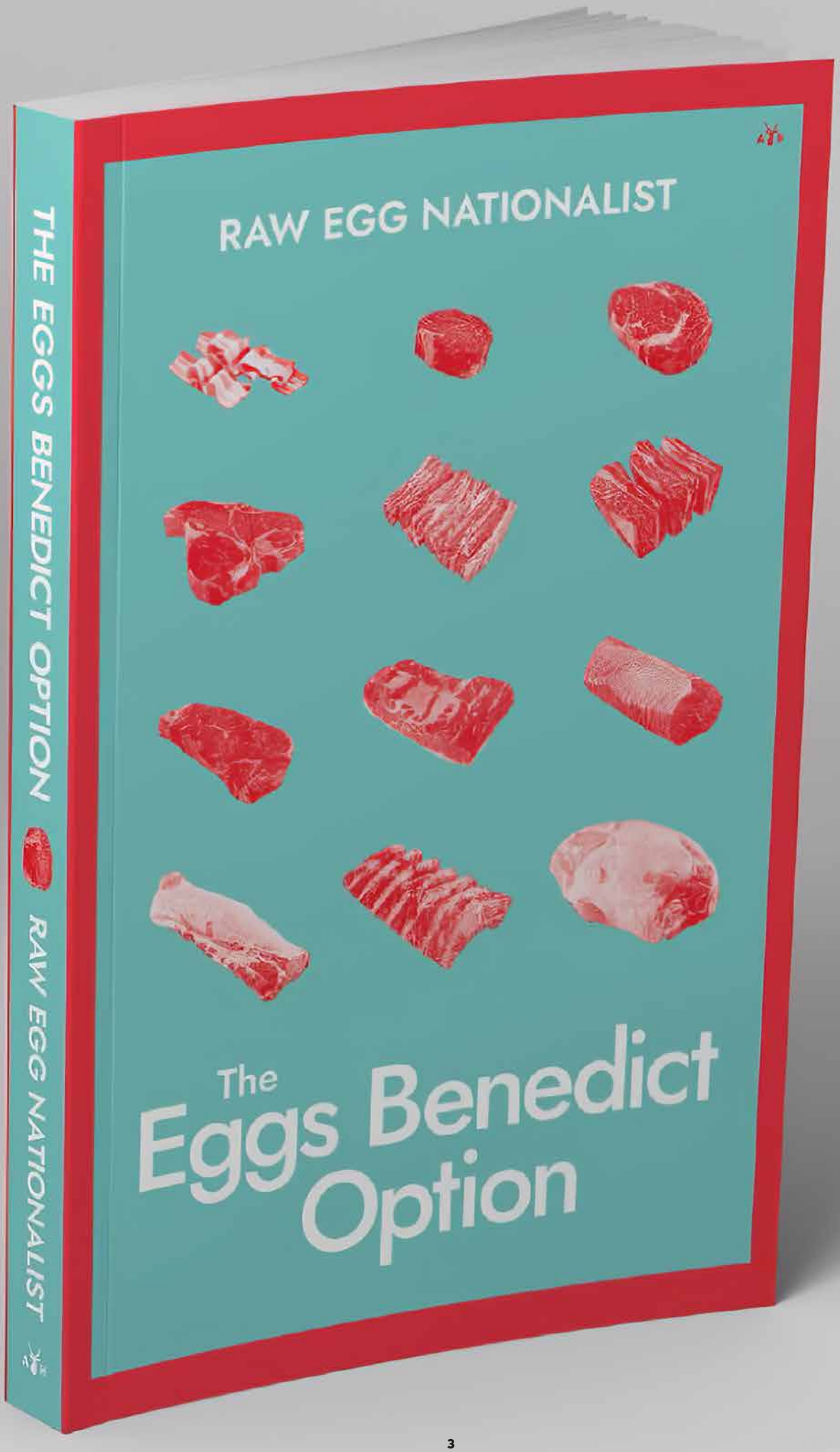
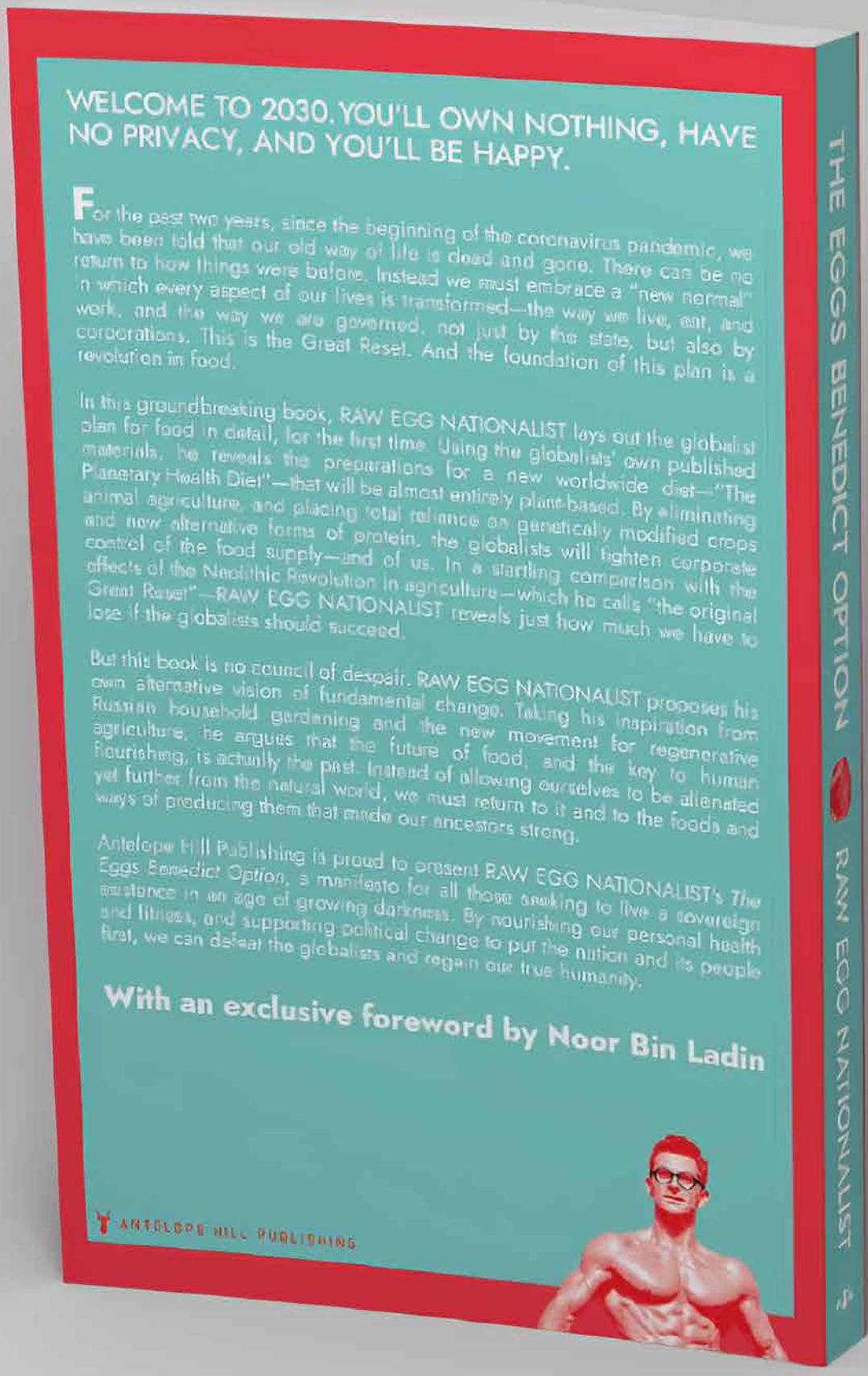

RAW EGG NATIONALIST
The
Eggs Benedict
Option
THE EGGS BENEDICT OPTION
RAW EGG NATIONALIST


WELCOME TO 2030. YOU'LL OWN NOTHING, HAVE NO PRIVACY, AND YOU'LL BE HAPPY.
For the past two years, since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, we have been told that our old way of life is dead and gone. There can be no return to how things were before. Instead we must embrace a "new normal" in which every aspect of our lives is transformed—the way we live, eat, and work, and the way we are governed, not just by the state, but also by corporations. This is the Great Reset. And the foundation of this plan is a revolution in food.
In this groundbreaking book, RAW EGG NATIONALIST lays out the globalist plan for food in detail, for the first time. Using the globalists' own published materials, he reveals the preparations for a new worldwide diet—"The Planetary Health Diet"—that will be almost entirely plant-based. By eliminating animal agriculture, and placing total reliance on genetically modified crops and new alternative forms of protein, the globalists will tighten corporate control of the food supply—and of us. In a startling comparison with the effects of the Neolithic Revolution in agriculture—which he calls "the original Great Reset"—RAW EGG NATIONALIST reveals just how much we have to lose if the globalists should succeed.
But this book is no council of despair. RAW EGG NATIONALIST proposes his own alternative vision of fundamental change. Taking his inspiration from Russian household gardening and the new movement for regenerative agriculture, he argues that the future of food, and the key to human flourishing, is actually the past. Instead of allowing ourselves to be alienated yet further from the natural world, we must return to it and to the foods and ways of producing them that made our ancestors strong.
Antelope Hill Publishing is proud to present RAW EGG NATIONALIST's *The Eggs Benedict Option*, a manifesto for all those seeking to live a sovereign existence in an age of growing darkness. By nourishing our personal health and fitness, and supporting political change to put the nation and its people first, we can defeat the globalists and regain our true humanity.
With an exclusive foreword by Noor Bin Ladin
ANTELOPE HILL PUBLISHING
THE EGGS BENEDICT OPTION
RAW EGG NATIONALIST

ANTELOPE HILL PUBLISHING

A podcast for the lost arts, reclaiming the literary Holy Land from the heathen

NewWrite

RAW EGG NATIONALIST *Your editor*

"Hello, my little hobbit friends"

Hello, my little hobbit friends. Pull up a seat. Welcome back to DARK ELF'S WORLD. In the spirit of openness and transparency exemplified by the FBI's release of the Mar-a-Lago affidavit, here's what's in store for you in Issue Eight.

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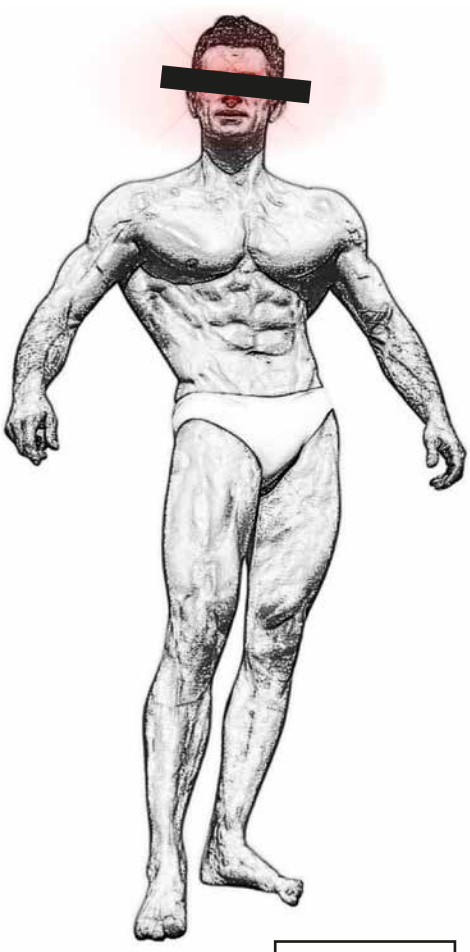

@babygravy9

"[redacted]"

[redacted]

Wonderful stuff, eh?

WANT TO WRITE FOR MAN'S WORLD?

Here at Man's World, we're always looking for new contributors to dazzle, inform and amuse our readership, which now stands in the hundreds of thousands.
If you have an idea for an article, of any kind, or even a new section or regular feature, don't hesitate to get in contact either by tweeting @babygravy9 or sending an email to mansworldmagazine@protonmail.com.

Generally, the word limit for articles is 3,000; although we will accept longer and (much) shorter articles where warranted. Take a look at the sections in this issue for guidance and inspiration.

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RAW EGG NATIONALIST

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RAW EGG NATIONALIST

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EIGHT / FALL 2022

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NOOR BIN LADIN
In conversation with
The MAN'S WORLD Interview: RAW EGG NATIONALIST

For readers of MAN'S WORLD, my guest for this issue needs no introduction. You'll most definitely be familiar with REN's work, and beyond that, his life's mission educating us all on the benefits of raw eggs, good health, masculinity and much more. A true renaissance man of our times, the list of topics REN can discuss at length is long! That being said, for this issue we thought it would be fitting to have a conversation about his new book, The Eggs Benedict Option *(for which I had the honour of writing the foreword).*

In one sentence, The Eggs Benedict Option *is the antidote to the Great Reset. In the book, REN meticulously outlines the Globalists' efforts over decades to capture one of the most essential resources necessary for our survival and endurance: our food. Due to their success in controlling what we eat — and with it the success of deliberately downgrading its quality and advocating poor diet recommendations — our society has declined dramatically compared to the early 20th century. REN documents the factors and methods deployed that have led to a multitude of negative consequences, all undeniable: we suffer of weaker physiognomies, degenerative diseases, downgraded DNA, and decreased fertility, among many other ailments, largely because of the "food" we consume.*

While it is painful to take stock of the results caused by the modern Western diet, there is hope, and it lies in The Eggs Benedict Option. *The book shows us a way out of this hell they have planned for us — live in the pod, eat the bugs — by reclaiming the way we produce and consume our food. Household gardening and regenerative agriculture, practiced in widespread fashion by our ancestors but also in our recent past and in certain parts of the world today, can once again become the norm — a "New Normal" that actually benefits us. Solutions are out there and have been proven to not only work, but to replenish our soils as well, which have been stripped for decades since the advent of industrialized agriculture. The field of regenerative agriculture is fascinating, and* The Eggs Benedict Option *offers a great introduction to an essential part of reclaiming our autonomy from the Globalists.*

The book is a must read, so get your copy as soon as you can — and in the meantime, let's find out more from the author himself.

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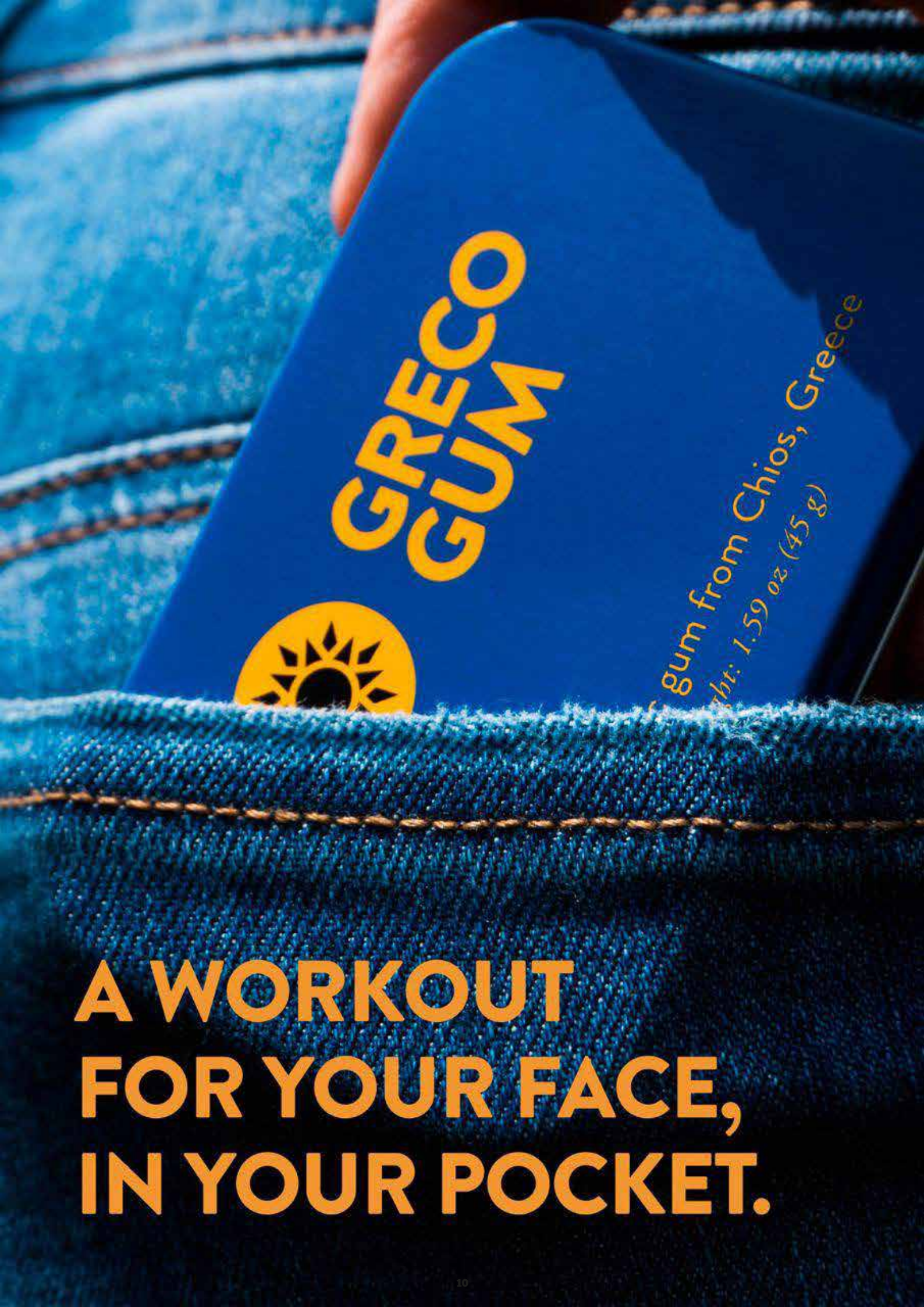
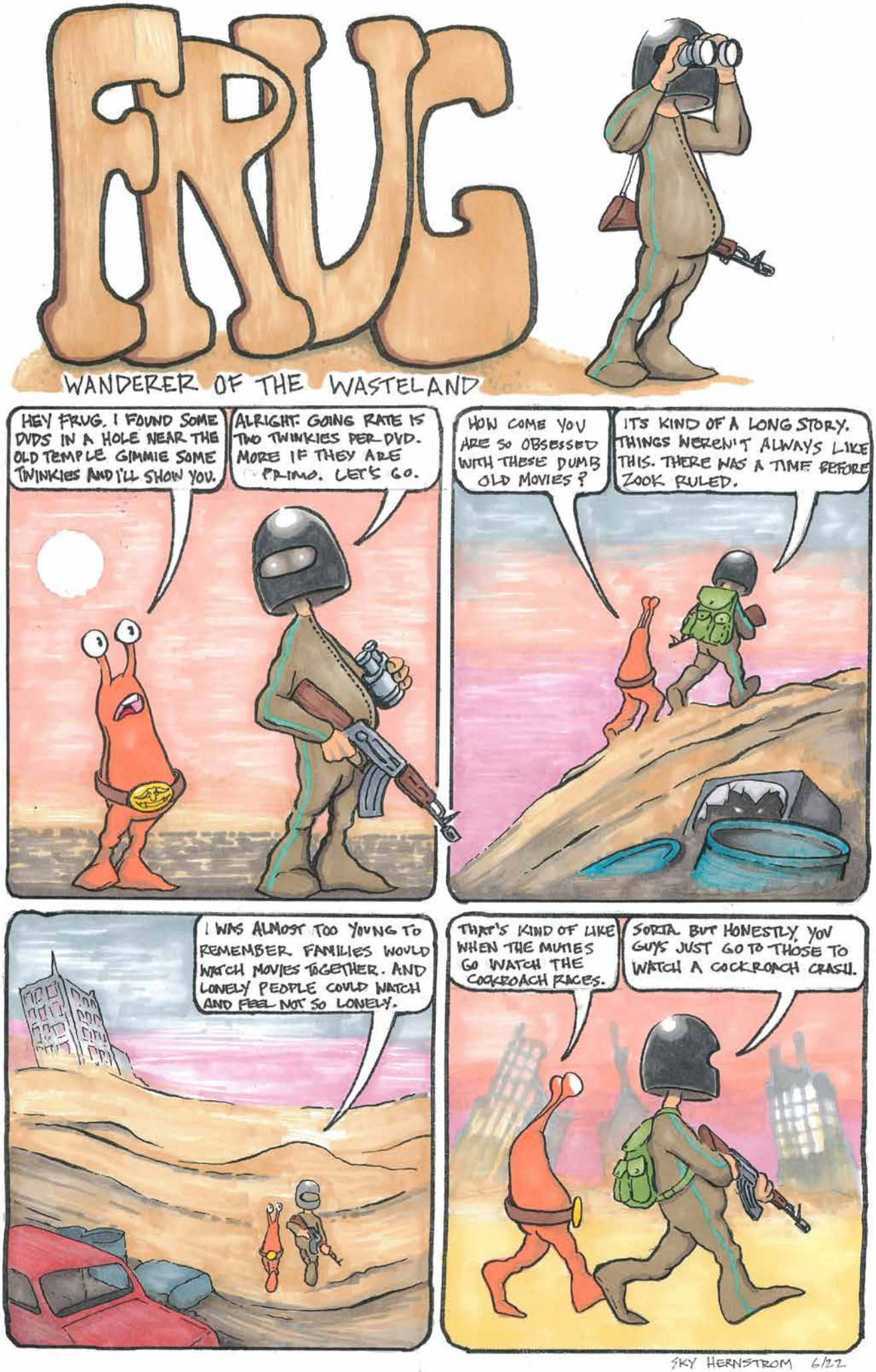

GRECO
GUM
gum from Chios, Greece
ht: 1.59 oz (45 g)
A WORKOUT
FOR YOUR FACE,
IN YOUR POCKET.


FRUG
WANDERER OF THE WASTELAND
HEY FRUG, I FOUND SOME DVDS IN A HOLE NEAR THE OLD TEMPLE GIMMIE SOME TWINKIES AND I'LL SHOW YOU.
ALRIGHT. GOING RATE IS TWO TWINKIES PER DVD. MORE IF THEY ARE PRIMO. LET'S GO.
HOW COME YOU ARE SO OBSESSED WITH THESE DUMB OLD MOVIES?
IT'S KIND OF A LONG STORY. THINGS WEREN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. THERE WAS A TIME BEFORE ZOOK RULED.
I WAS ALMOST TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER. FAMILIES WOULD WATCH MOVIES TOGETHER. AND LONELY PEOPLE COULD WATCH AND FEEL NOT SO LONELY.
THAT'S KIND OF LIKE WHEN THE MUTIES GO WATCH THE COCKROACH RACES.
SORTA. BUT HONESTLY, YOU GUYS JUST GO TO THOSE TO WATCH A COCKROACH CRASH.
SKY HERNSTROM 6/22

THE ABSOLUTE STATE OF BLUECHECK TWITTER

CARTOONS BY ENDING BIGLY PROMOTIONAL ACCOUNT (@endingbigly)

Tim Wise
@timjacobwise
Any MAGAt who advocates violence in response to Trump facing justice should be arrested now. Free speech does not give you the right to advocate violence. Arrest them. Crush them. Make their children functional orphans. End them.
9:31 PM · 8/8/22 · Twitter Web App

ANYONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THE (OBVIOUSLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED) TRUMP RAID IS POLITICAL IS ADVOCATING VIOLENCE.

ANYONE ADVOCATING VIOLENCE NEEDS TO BE VIOLENTLY KIDNAPPED, TORTURED, CASTRATED AND MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD. ANYONE.

HALLEY'S COMET
APPEARED IN APRIL 1066, PORTENDING DISASTER
"THE BASTARD"
NICKNAME OF WILLIAM I OF NORMANDY
ONE WEEK
THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK FOR KING HAROLD TO MARCH FROM LONDON TO HASTINGS TO MEET WILLIAM AND HIS ARMY
150,000
THE MOST INFLATED FIGURE FOR THE SIZE OF WILLIAM'S FORCES. MODERN HISTORIANS INSTEAD PROPOSE 10-12,000
2000 NORMANS, 4000 SAXONS
A RESPECTABLE ESTIMATE OF DEATHS

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

FACTS AND FIGURES

OCTOBER 14 2022 IS THE 956TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOST CONSEQUENTIAL BATTLE IN ENGLISH HISTORY

HOUSECARLS

HAROLD'S ELITE AXE-WIELDING BODYGUARD

ONE DAY (DAWN TO DUSK)

LENGTH OF THE BATTLE

224 FEET

THE LENGTH OF THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY, WOVEN TO COMMEMORATE THE NORMAN VICTORY

BATTLE ABBEY

THE ABBEY FOUNDED BY WILLIAM ON THE SITE OF THE BATTLE

CHRISTMAS DAY 1066

DATE OF WILLIAM'S CORONATION AS KING OF ENGLAND

BRONZE AGE PERVERT

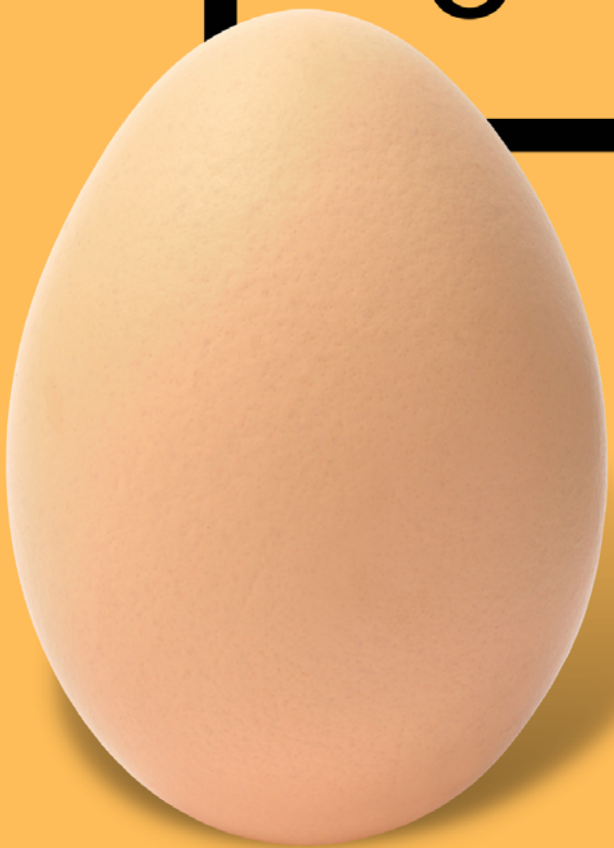
CARIBBEAN RHYTHMS

B R O A D C A S T

BRONZEAGEPERVERT

ONLY

egg



(Seriously. It's only an egg.)

RAMOS GIN FIZZ

An egg-white brunch classic

WHAT YOU NEED

2 ounces gin
3/4 ounce simple syrup
1/2 ounce heavy cream
1/2 ounce lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1/2 ounce lime juice, freshly squeezed
3 dashes orange flower water
1 fresh egg white
Club soda, chilled, to top

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Add the gin, simple syrup, heavy cream, lemon and lime juice, orange flower water and egg white into a shaker and shake vigorously for 30 seconds.

Add ice and shake for at least 30 seconds, until well-chilled.

Strain into a tall glass.

Pour a little bit of club soda back and forth between the empty halves of the shaker tins to pick up any residual cream and egg white, then

Orange flower water, otherwise known as orange blossom water, should be readily available at the supermarket. A small amount of orange juice or even orange liquer like triple sec or Cointreau can be used instead.

THE HISTORY OF WESTERN ART

with RIVELINO THE ARTIST

The Honeysuckle Bower, Peter Paul Rubens (c.1609)

THE MASTER

LUXORY LIFESTYLE

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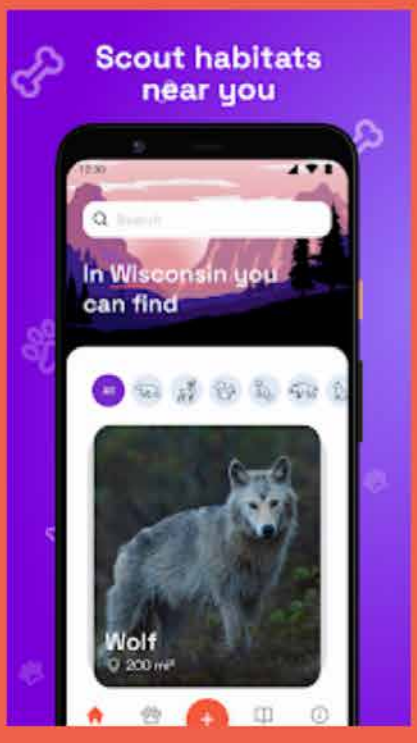
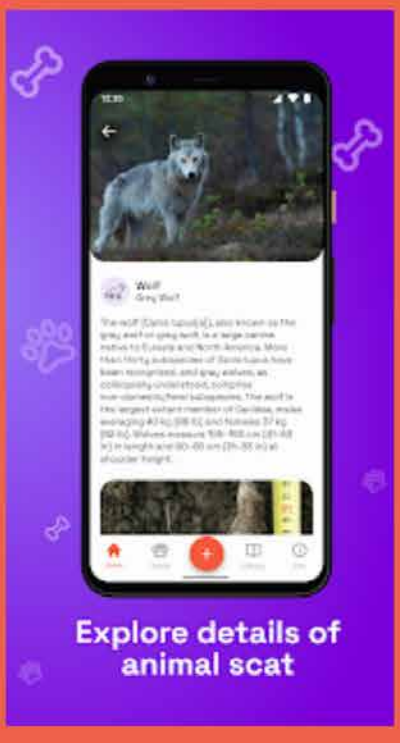
@gentlemanluxxx

who_poo_app

Who Poo

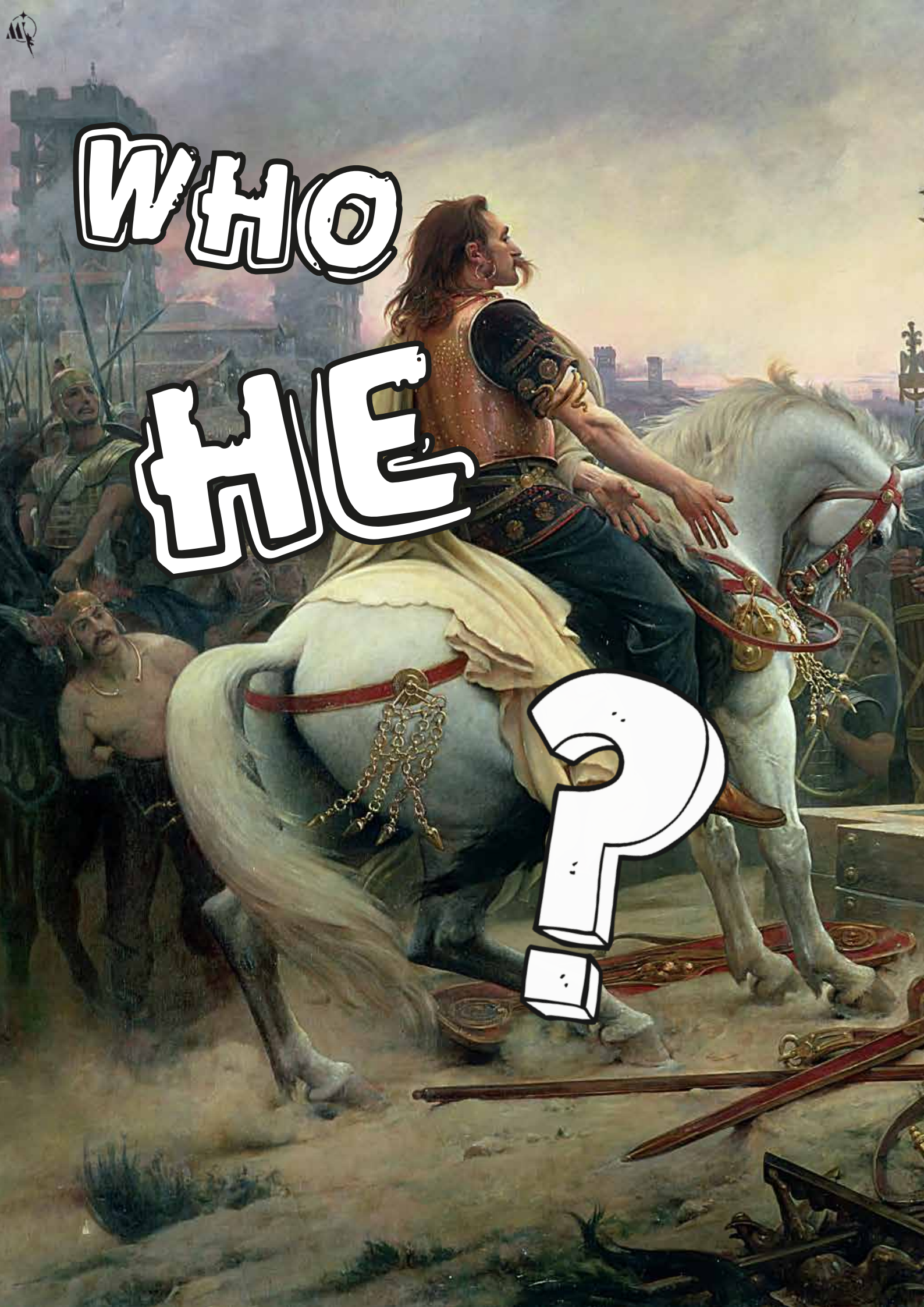

Scout habitats near you
In Wisconsin you can find
Wolf

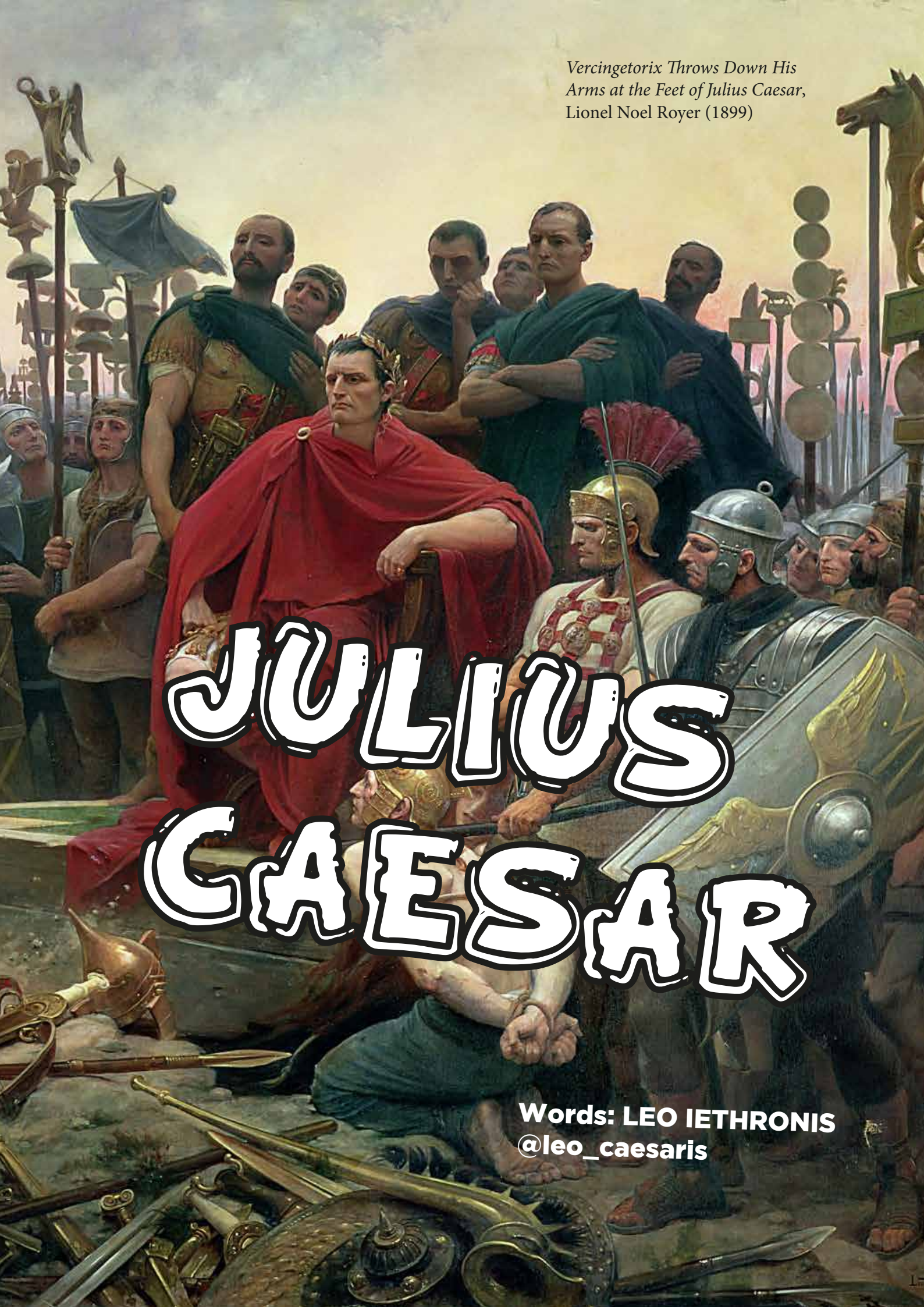

Explore details of animal scat

Be prepared for your next adventure

Who Poo is a new wildlife app for hikers, dogwalkers, hunters and outdoorsmen. Designed for Americans who don't always fit in an urban cage, let's make it a Who Poo summer! Containing an interactive library, Who Poo explores wild animals and their scat near you. Who Poo uses your location to show animals that may be nearby. A filter feature in the library allows users to input scat dimensions and animal track features to find matching wildlife. The library includes photos from President Theodore Roosevelt's North American hunting journals. Who Poo users can also upload their own photos to complete the in-app encyclopedia. Who Poo is currently free and available for download from Google Play and Apple stores.

whopooapp.com


WHO
HE
?



Vercingetorix Throws Down His Arms at the Feet of Julius Caesar, Lionel Noel Royer (1899)

JULIUS CAESAR

Words: LEO IETHRONIS
@leo_caesaris

Gaius Julius Caesar was a proud Roman from a good family, descended from the Trojan prince Aeneas, son of Venus. His uncle Marius, known as the "Third Founder of Rome", named Caesar a priest of Jupiter. He would have the honor of living near and tending to the great temple. This made the military, and therefore political life, forbidden to him.

After emerging victorious from the ongoing civil war, Sulla the Dictator stripped Caesar of his rank. He further demanded that he divorce his wife. Caesar refused. Instead, he chose exile and adventure in the provinces by joining the army, which was now open to him. As he was crossing the Alps with his companions, they had snickered at the idea that the barbarian villages they were passing through could host any political intrigues. Caesar replied: "I would rather be the first man here than the second in Rome."

Caesar suffered from ill health for most of his life. The military was his treatment. He preferred to sleep outdoors in the open air, march daily, and keep a simple diet in order to preserve and strengthen his body. In Cadiz, where the great Phoenician temple to Hercules stood, he came across a statue of Alexander the Great. Dumbstruck before it, lost in his thoughts, he finally burst into tears. His friends questioned him. He replied: "Do you not think it is a matter for sorrow that while Alexander, at my age, was already king of so many people, I have not yet achieved any success?"

Upon Sulla's death, he returned home with great ambition. His inheritance had been confiscated and he could only purchase a simple home in a crowded area of the city. He started as an advocate in the public courts and acquired political rank. He then ran for the highest religious position of the state, the high priest or Pontifex Maximus. He was now an outsider taking on a large, well-established political machine. To fight it he greatly indebted himself, borrowing money from Italian merchants, and used the proceeds to shower the destitute men of influence with bribes or favors. There was no turning back: he was risking everything again. On the day of the election, he greeted his mother: "Mother, today you shall see your son either Pontifex Maximus or an exile." Caesar triumphed and was granted the pontifical residence on the Sacred Way in the Forum.

During the Catiline conspiracy, the conservative faction, the Optimates, led by Cato and Cicero demanded the death penalty for the conspirators. As every senator rose in favor one by one, Caesar stood up alone and gave a speech decrying that there was nothing traditional about putting men with great names to death without trial. The speech swayed many of the senators before Cato rose up and denounced Caesar as being part of the conspiracy himself. He claimed he had seen Caesar receive a note surely written by one of the suspects. He demanded it be read aloud. Caesar opened the note and read a love letter from Servillia, Cato's sister. Nevertheless, senators walked back to Cato's camp and the sentence was carried out. For his affront and defence of republican norms, Cicero's men attacked Caesar with drawn swords in the senate house. His friends rallied around him and shielded him.

When he tried to tackle the corruption of the oligarchs while he was serving as praetor, he was again threatened with violence and the Senate stripped him of his office by decree. In response, he headed home, dismissed his bodyguards, and put away his toga. In despair of the political climate of the time, Caesar intended to retire. But the next morning, the angry and riotous people of Rome arrived at his house intent on reinstating him back to power. He calmed them and held them back. The Senate, alarmed, commended him in response, and in fear of his popularity restored him to his office.

Being hampered by the Optimates and deeply in debt, he masterminded an alliance with the richest man in Rome and the most prominent general to overwhelm the political sphere. His reward was to be granted three provinces to govern, including Cisalpine Gaul bordering the most feared enemies of Rome who had once sacked the city. Finally, he could make his fortune. When the Helvetii burned their own villages and threatened to cross into the province, Caesar mustered his legions and arrived at the Rhône in seven days. After crushing some of the tribesmen into full retreat, the rest attacked his position by surprise. His men brought him a horse. He then declared, "This horse, I will use for the pursuit after my victory; but now let us go against the enemy", before leading the march on foot. He next marched on an army of Germans that was threatening to cross the Rhine, and became the first Roman to do so instead. Not satisfied with his victory, he landed in Britannia amidst storms and dangerous seas. On the way back to Gaul, when a legion had drifted towards German lands, he marched for days to save his men from being encircled in enemy territory. This was a testament to Caesar's men's discipline and utmost loyalty to their general. The great spoils of the campaign were sent back to Rome for the benefit of the people.

After continued attacks by the Senate towards his dignity and honor, including the denial of his proper rights and triumphs, the Senate finally declared him an enemy of the state. In 49 BC, after many attempts to reconcile and compromise, Caesar crossed the Rubicon and marched on Rome. His own right hand man Labienus defected to the Pompeian side. Caesar, ever magnanimous, sent him his baggage and coin. Pompey Magnus and the Senate fled to Greece to raise

their eastern troops. Caesar had to act and decided to pursue. With great confidence they had placed the Adriatic fleet, meant to blockade the sea, in winter quarters. The seas were treacherous at that time of year and crossing would be suicide. But it wasn't winter and only Caesar knew this because he was in charge of the calendar's drift caused by the pontiffs' negligence. He knew it was actually the end of Autumn and while it was dangerous, it could be done. He crossed with seven legions and landed in Greece.

Caesar observed the bodies of his countrymen lining the fields of battle on that fateful day at Pharsalus. The Pompeian cavalry was torn to pieces, and routed by Caesar's hidden cohort on the right flank, followed by the rest of the army against the river. "They would have it so. Even I, Gaius Caesar, after so many great deeds, should have been found guilty in their courts, if I had not turned to my army for help." Many of the servants in the Pompeian camp were slaughtered, but the soldiers were welcomed into Caesar's legions. As for those prominent men who had risen against him — Cicero, Brutus – they were forgiven. While crossing the Hellespont with a small boat, Caesar met Lucius Cassius who was commanding ten warships. Caesar urged him to surrender, and Cassius sued for mercy which was granted.

Pompey fled to Egypt to ask the child pharaoh Ptolemy for help. Instead, he was assassinated to please a pursuing Caesar, who instead met the news with fury and sadness. Caesar realized that the true power in Egypt was the pharaoh's eunuchs, who would undoubtedly betray Rome. And thus he became embroiled with a dynastic dispute between the young regent and his sister Cleopatra, who gave Caesar a son. Caesar was forced to fight a brutal siege. While assaulting the bridge leading to the island of the Great Lighthouse, the Roman troops had to take to the sea and retreat. As his small skiff was overrun with fleeing soldiers, Caesar took off his armor, jumped in the bay and swam for 300 meters while holding documents in one hand, and clenching his cloak with his teeth so the enemy could not capture it as a trophy.

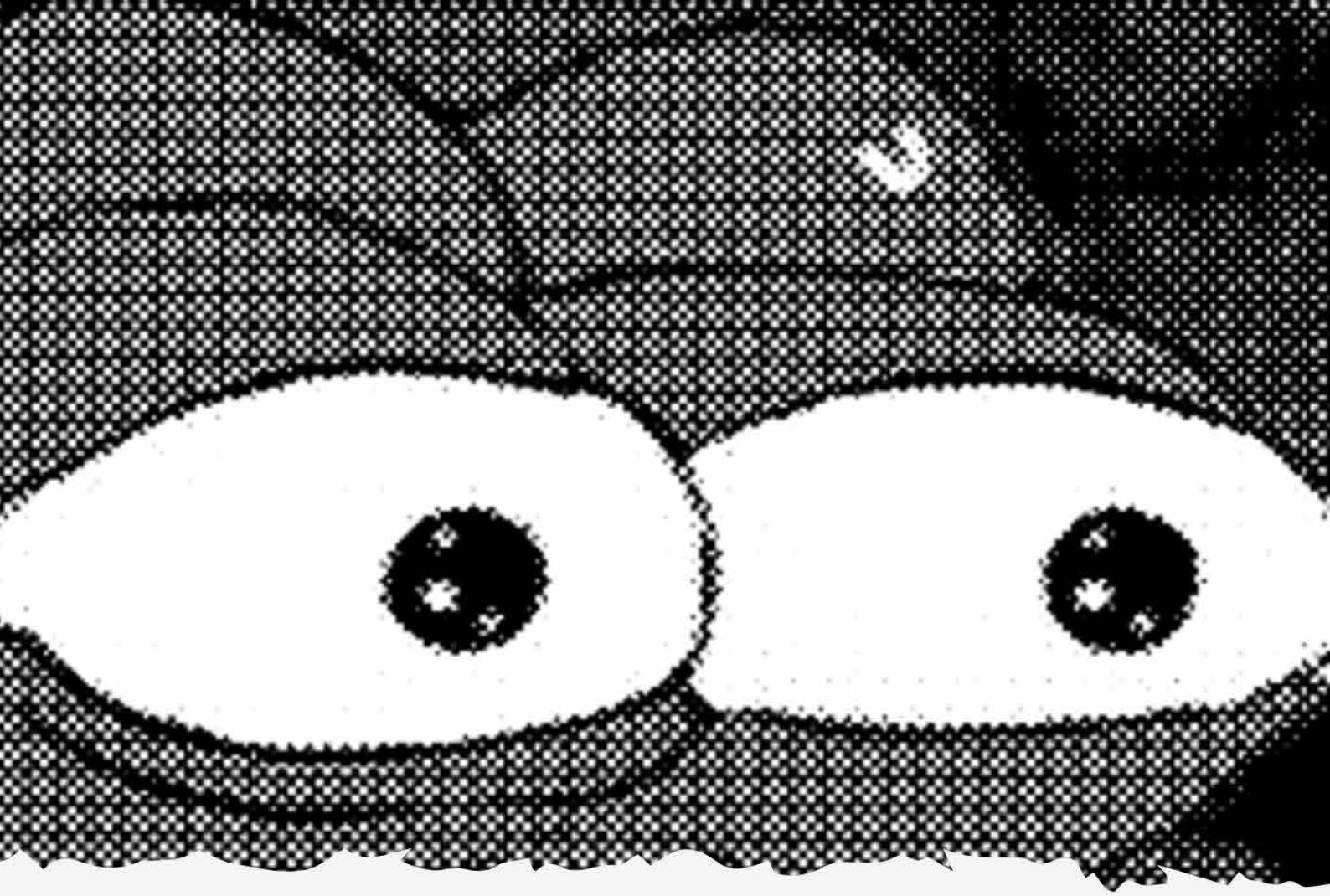
Amidst the Civil War, distant provinces were beginning to challenge the authority of the Roman people. This was the case of Pharnaces II, ruler of the Bosphoran Kingdom once subdued by Pompey. The king took his chances and advanced on Anatolia. Caesar could not ignore an ally of Rome seizing its very lands. He marched off from Egypt into Asia Minor, through the Levant. In typical fashion, he advanced at lightning pace by foregoing supplies. Finally, Caesar and Pharnaces met head on at Zela. The armies deployed on two opposing steep hills. Caesar began building his camp and only had one line deployed on the front. Pharnaces then descended from his hill and started moving towards the Roman camp. Caesar laughed at the sight, saying that Pharnaces must think them fools to fall for such a feint. He stopped laughing once Pharnaces reached the foot of the hill, however. The Romans sounded the alarm and what was left on the front formed a makeshift line. There was total panic, and Caesar's men fought out of desperation. Pharnaces' chariots went back and forth harassing them. But in the end, the Romans used the higher ground advantage and pushed through with brute strength.

Finally, the right line had a breakthrough and slowly Pharnaces' center collapsed and he fled. But Caesar had no time for such things and sent the Governor of Asia after him. He had more important games to play. Pompey's campaigns in the East had lasted for years, and he was one of Rome's most celebrated generals. Caesar's reconquest had taken three days. So a report of the campaign was sent to the Senate and was distributed all around Italy. It contained only three words. "Veni, Vidi, Vici": I came, I saw, I conquered. Finally reaching the end of the war, he met his old friend Labienus once again at Munda. There followed a battle Caesar described as "fighting for his very life". Labienus fell, and Caesar sent men to retrieve his body. He was buried with full honors.

Caesar fought and marched with his men, at the front. He dictated eloquent and celebrated writings on campaign. He braved terrain that no Roman before him had dared to take on. When his men were tired or threatened to mutiny, a mere look of disappointment launched them into pleas of forgiveness. There was no conquered enemy he did not forgive. There was no land he marched upon which he did not conquer. There were no tribes which he did not defeat. Even the very divine queen of Egypt fell before his charm. His sacrilegious assassination kickstarted the creation of the greatest empire in human history. He had reached the peak of glory, and his name resonates forever along the halls of history. If you seek a man to admire, what better man than Caesar?

"Visitors from Overseas"
Nicholas Roerich,1901

Oil on canvas
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



HATER AID

Here at HaterAid, we help shitposters turn their lives around.

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THE GAYLY STOIC

PODCAST

Episode 1: Seneca Loves Desmond!

THE SCULPTOR'S ART

with FEN DE VILLIERS

Sweet saccharine figures of the past be gone! Lee Lawrie obliterates all sentimental niceties and hits you right between the eyes with this virile behemoth. Retvrners everywhere capitulate to the brutal brawny aesthetic of this modernist masterpiece. Lawrie summoned a titan into our mere mortal realm. "Atlas" now forever echoes his fierce struggle to hold up the heavens, an archetypal celebration of endurance.

The exaggerated musculature, stylised facial features and body parts of the bronze sculpture are hallmarks of the Art Deco movement. Lawrie is not getting bogged down in the details but rather is thinking holistically about the broader composition and the power it emits. This is a terrific example of a confident and life-affirming sculpture that will continue to resonate down through the ages.

"Atlas" sums up exactly what I like about early Modernism, there was the wish to bring the perennial elements into the now and reimagine them in a savagely modernistic and vital way. It wasn't nostalgia or petty escapism, it was maintaining a true root to the story of our civilization and keeping that fire alive. If artists were doing it then, we can do it now and truly dream again.

Visit fendevilliers.com. Fen tweets @fendevilliers

Lee Lawrie
"Atlas"

1937
Bronze
15m
6,400kg

ON COUNTERCULTURE

Celebration of counterculture for its own sake is just a gesture of futility, say AENEAS TACTICUS MINOR

You don't want to be a counterculture. You want to be a culture. The whole point of a counterculture is to replace a culture. Otherwise it's pointless. If you're celebrating counterculture for its own sake you're celebrating how weak you are. Either you've been defeated or you've failed. Or else you're lying to yourself and claiming that somehow your ghetto or your shtetl or your wasteland Indian reservation with a trailer park beside the casino and empty broken refrigerators lying around in the grass for decoration is somehow just as good as the real culture.

You want to get the fuck out of a counterculture, unless you're using it to infiltrate, subvert and dominate the dominant culture. Otherwise you might as well be like those kids you see on documentaries sometimes. You know the ones. They all have Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and sit around in Indian reservations on Friday nights with a plastic goldfish bag full of liquid diesel fuel so they can take turns inhaling the fumes through a cardboard tube.

Yep, sometimes huffing Lysol just isn't satisfying when it comes to killing brain cells and transporting you to sweet oblivion so you feel like have to get high off something you siphoned out of a pick-up truck with a straw in the casino parking lot, and then inhale it through a leftover toilet roll to prove just how little you give a shit anymore about your life or anything else. That's basically what it feels like to be proud of a counterculture. You might as well just say it openly: you're too chicken for suicide.

A lot of people used to think 'punk' is 'cool'. They still see something dangerous, manly and rebellious in punk rock because it sounds so aggressive. Old people don't understand it and tell you to turn it down if you play it too loud. That doesn't prove anything. Punk isn't cool. It's even less cool than jazz.

'Cool' as a description shouldn't be used anymore anyway. It's a debased currency, like every single other currency in this wreck of a world that was left behind after World War Two. At least we still know what it means.

'Cool' is an attitude. It shows strength, power and poise. Also manliness. It's not just a manly attitude, it's a high-testosterone, low-anxiety, low-neurosis manliness. Nothing can overpower you if you're 'cool', and when you are you have so much power over women you don't need to talk about it. They just come to you whether they like it or not. And if you reject them they're fine. They understand, even if they're bitter and resentful, and cry themselves

'COOL' AS A DESCRIPTION SHOULDN'T BE USED ANYMORE ANYWAY. IT'S A DEBASED CURRENCY, LIKE EVERY SINGLE OTHER CURRENCY IN THIS WRECK OF A WORLD THAT WAS LEFT BEHIND AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

to sleep. You were right to reject them and they know it.

If you're cool, you're fine with danger. You can take care of yourself.

Cigarettes are cool, smoking is cool, but addiction to smoking is not. Quitting smoking and gaining twenty pounds in three weeks is not cool. Getting pissed off because you haven't had a cigarette all day isn't cool either. Getting pissed off is never cool, as you know. Neither is heart disease, emphysema, lung cancer, throat cancer or being out of breath when you walk up two flights of stairs. Chain smoking is never cool, except chain smoking does sort of look cool in a movie.

Cocaine is also cool. You have to be cool to know where to find cocaine without begging people to give you some of theirs. Knowing multiple cocaine dealers is always cool, and buying cocaine properly is cool too. Especially when you pay cash for it and the dealer pretends to be your friend, and you have other people relying on you to get them high, and you spread out the powder yourself on a clean pocket mirror, cut it up with a credit card, chop it into snortable lines and then pull out a smooth, crisp banknote in a large denomination, roll it up like an expert, and offer it like a gentleman to the ladies first so they each snort a line, because secretly they're all nervous and aren't brave enough to have any without being invited.

Knowing how to find cocaine and use it is cool. Actually using it isn't cool. It makes you angry, violent and boring, and you get cold sweats and grind your teeth, and you don't know when to shut up, and either your dick gets so small you're afraid it's going to shrivel up and fall off like a wart, or else it might creep back inside your balls and go into reverse, like the dick equivalent of your belly button going from an 'innie' to an 'outie', except it's going from 'outie' to 'innie'.

If that doesn't happen, your dick not only gets hard, it gets too hard, and it's grown so much you're afraid it's going to break open the dickskin, which is stretched so tight it's starting to hurt, and there's a little blue vein running underneath and on the left side and it's throbbing painfully and you're afraid it's turned black. The whole dickskin is bright-red and shiny and you could swear it actually glows. When cocaine does this to you you probably shouldn't have sex because you already don't even want to go piss in case you end up pissing blood. Ejaculating would just make everything complicated, and so would a condom if you had to use one. The dickskin feels like a too-tight condom before you've even put one on. So you have an erection that refuses to go away and in some ways it's worse than no erection at all.

Impotence isn't cool, pissing blood isn't cool, not being able to have sex isn't cool, and neither is having a heart flutter, or cocaine chest pains, or a stroke, or severe motor and neurological damage, or not feeling the left side of your body, or fucking up your face so that it looks like you're about to yawn, but you never actually yawn, so people think either you're a retard or you had a stroke. Not everything is cool about cocaine.

Jazz used to be cool. It stopped being cool after 1920. That was when alcohol became illegal in the States. Then jazz became background music for middle-aged white people who thought they were edgy because they were going to 'secret' bars that everybody else knew about and could easily find and drank in every night. By the time alcohol was legal again in the 1930s jazz was so lame that everyone's parents played jazz records at home. Your teachers at school were trying to show off how much they knew about jazz when you were eight years old. By World War Two it was already the way marijuana is today. It was a hobby for retired schoolteachers from Denmark.

Punk never had a chance to be cool. Originally a punk was a prostitute. Then it meant boy-whore. Then it meant not just a boy-whore, but a boy who got

used as a sex toy by a hobo. Think about how degrading that is. It's bad enough to be kept as a pet dick-pincushion by anybody. But if you get used by somebody powerful, like a famous Hollywood movie director or a United States Senator, at least you can almost sort of feel proud. Sure you're getting man-raped till you bleed a couple of times a day, but it's by a man who people look up to. You probably do yourself, even as their teenaged rape victim. Every night when you bite hard on that pillow you can think: one day I'm gonna rape pretty teenagers just like him. Some of his glory rubs off on you, or gets injected up your ass anyway. You hope it does, especially if you have to go to sleep with the taste of his dick in your mouth.

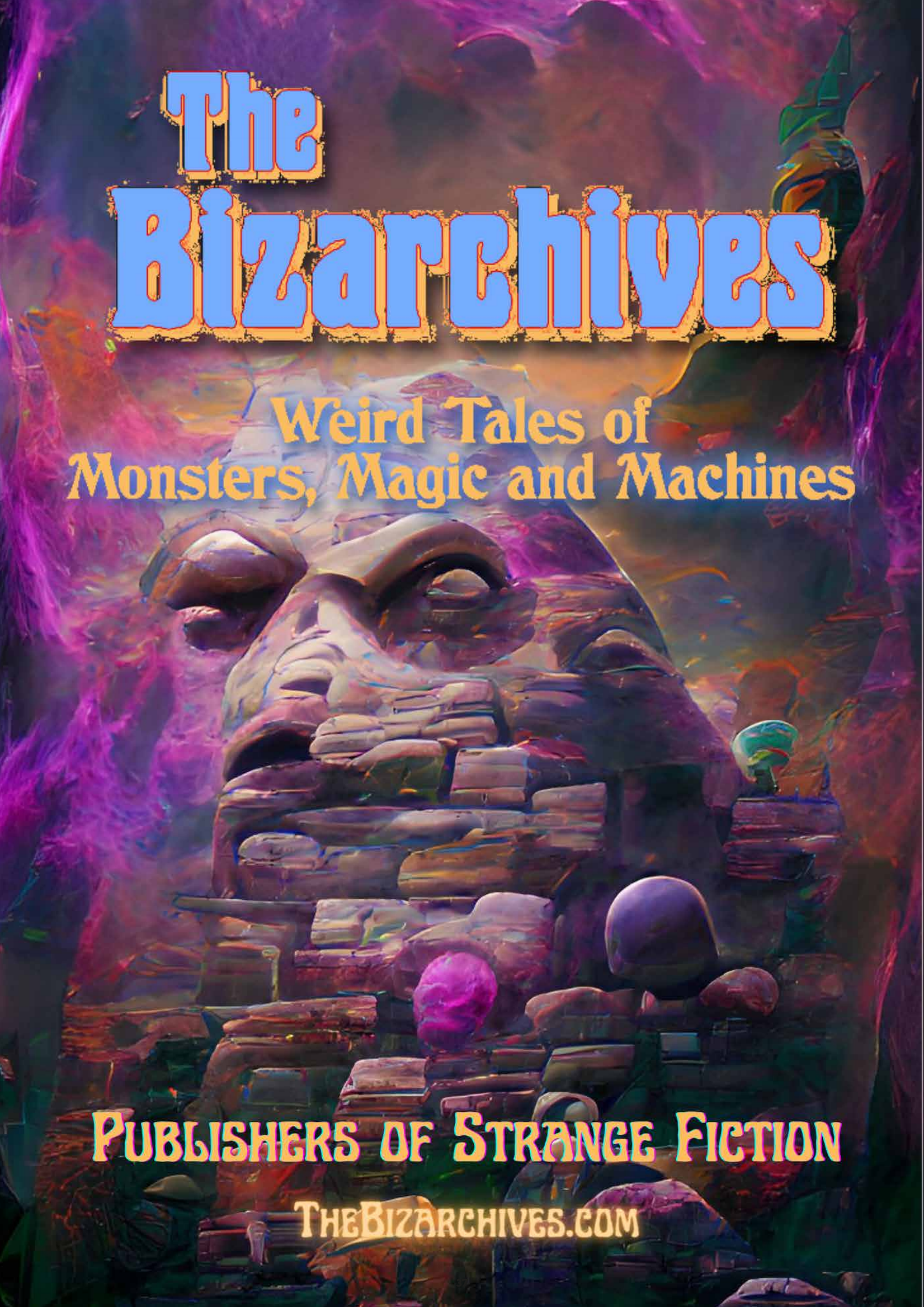
What's worse, getting assraped every night when you're a teenager or spending your twenties working ninety-hour weeks at an investment bank? You end up with the same benefits in the end. Also, investment banking and boy-whore pillow-biting involve pretty much the exact same people anyway so either way you end up with the same social and professional connections. In either case the rest of your life will be spent getting revenge on the world because not even homosexuals like getting fucked in the ass.

When you're a hobo's punk it's a different story. A hobo is not just poor and homeless. He's part of a counterculture too, of other pathetic single men who like to illegally hitch a ride on a freight train and sleep in a boxcar full of pig shit until they get thrown off the train, or put in jail, or just decide to leave because they see a farm where they think they can take jobs from illegal immigrants who snuck across the Rio Grande in search of the American Dream and are now stuck picking fruit for fifteen hours a day until they are rescued from their suffering by a miserable death, far away from home and everything and everyone they love. Hoboes wear gloves that have no fingers, and eat baked beans straight out of the can with a cheap stolen spoon.

We're all young once, and getting drugged and raped can happen to the best of us. Sometimes it's just unavoidable. But if you let it happen more than once, or let yourself become a kept boy, or worst of all let yourself be used as a bumsex plug by a homeless man who keeps his possessions in a polka-dot handkerchief tied to the end of a stick that he uses to beat you if you don't suck his dick, then I'm sorry to say it but you are nowhere close to cool, and I can't say I envy you for spending your moonlit nights in the middle of a haystack getting assraped.

No, there is nothing cool about punk and there never was. Not even in the 1970s when people invented 'punk rock' because they didn't have the talent to play normal music. Mediocrity and failure was built into the punk culture from the beginning. It gave molested kids a way to work off steam. There were a lot of molested kids in the 1970s thanks to birth control pills, condoms and Women's Liberation, which led to slut moms who got divorced and ended up married to stepdads who were mainly interested in teenaged stepdaughters but sometimes used their stepsons as punks when they were bored of playing air guitar in the basement rec room. It was the 1970s. People liked to experiment.

Once you understand this, all the screaming, swearing, anger, breaking shit and total lack of harmony makes sense. So does all the body piercing, tattooing, head-shaving, leather with studs and general self-mutilation. Punk isn't about music, it's about yelling at the world because your mom was a slut and married some guy who put his hand in your pants. People who didn't have that sort of thing happen generally didn't become punks. Why would happy people do this shit?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MW EXPLORE!

Migration of the butterlies, North America

From September to October each year, millions of monarch butterflies migrate south from Canada and the US to overwintering sites in Mexico (as much as 3,000 miles). Unlike many migratory animals, these butterflies will never make a return journey.

The butterflies head for just a handful of mountains in central Mexico. They cluster together by the million, as seen here, on a particular kind of tree, the oyamel fir. These trees create a special microclimate for the butterflies that prevents them from getting either too hot or too cold.

After winter has passed, the monarchs return part of the way back north and lay eggs, which become caterpillars and then butterflies. These butterflies fly further north, lay eggs, and the process repeats, again and again, until the monarchs are finally back where they — or rather their recent ancestors — started out.

CREATING A REAL FUTURE

If we want to avoid the fate of all empires, say ADAM THE POETRARCH, we need to stay on top of our own bullshit

Things can change radically and yet somehow remain exactly the same.

We can be sure that the priestly caste of the Middle Ages, along with their subjects, assumed a moral and intellectual high ground when comparing themselves to the pagans that came before them. 1600-odd years ago, the Venerable Bede, an Anglo-Saxon monk, mused on how the pagans should be treated, doing so with a contemptuous sympathy that reminds us of the patient ruthlessness of the globalist enterprise:

"…it is impossible to efface all at once everything from their strong minds, just as, when one wishes to reach the top of a mountain, he must climb by stages and step by step, not by leaps and bounds."

However, the attitudes of civilisations built upon paganism would not have seemed much different. Although the Romans turned somewhat of a blind eye to how their own provincial subjects worshipped, they in fact took a deeply impertinent view towards foreign cults. In modern times, as we know, the oligarchs that grind our society into the ground, along with their cheerleaders, laugh at the apparently backwards thinking that flourished not too long ago. They too are oblivious to the fact that their immortality is not assured.

It seems, then, that every era is doomed to repeat the same mistakes of pride and hubris that contribute to its eventual self-destruction. Understandably so, for each era finds it difficult to identify its own bullshit. Each new empire heralds a new dawn, just as each new age with its supposedly new ideas one day falls on its ass, its weak underbelly exposed to the unforgiving light of day.

So what of it?

Well, firstly, I think there is a strong possibility that we will win come light of day. John Glubb, in his vast and brilliant historical study The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival, shows that approximately "250 years emerges as the average length of national greatness", and that this average has not varied for 3,000 years. This becomes significant when we consider that the U.S. declared independence in 1776, Captain Cook landed in Australia in 1770 and it was from 1815 that the Brits truly catapulted ahead, following the Battle of Waterloo. Comparing historical states from Assyria to Persia and from the Roman Republic to the Ottoman Empire, Glubb shows that empires in decline have been marked by stages of intellect (i.e. hubris) and decadence which eventually topple them from within. By "decadence", what he means is the broad influx of foreigners, the welfare state, selfishness, the loss

HOW DO WE AVOID THE MISTAKES OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US?

of a sense of duty and so on. You can find contemporary historians of the crumbling Arab Empire of the tenth century deploring the materialism of the age. They deride the influence that Baghdad pop singers with their lutes had on the wayward and immoral young and they speak of the corruption of high-level officials. Women during this time began demanding an entry into the professions. It was not long after this that public order fractured and the Arab world saw a collapse from which it has arguably never recovered. Sound familiar?

Glubb contrasts late-stage decadence with the early, pioneering stages of empire, marked originally by "an extraordinary display of energy and courage". Our sphere today has just this courage, exemplified in part by those who have sacrificed incomes and relationships for the sake of medical autonomy and intellectual sovereignty. What's more, we have an exceptional energy. We have the passion, the commitment and the drive.

However, if in time we do indeed see the collapse of globo-homo and our sphere has a foundational hand in birthing a real new dawn, the question remains: how do we avoid the mistakes of those that came before us? Going forward, will we be aware of where the weaknesses in our underbelly might lie? Will we be able to see ourselves falling prey to the pride and hubris that bring about decay? Will we, in time, be able to identify our own bullshit?

Bullshit, after all, has a habit of creeping in and settling down like it owns the place. In July of this year, USA TODAY published the apparently serious article, 'Fat shaming won't fix America's obesity problem." In many ways, the article encapsulates the fate of a Western world that has moved from Thomas Jefferson to Rachel Levine and from the exploration of foreign lands to mask mandates. The piece features the thoughts of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, which considers "fat a part of human body diversity". It quotes the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health at the University of Connecticut, which posits that "weight stigma is itself a public health issue." To top it all off, it comes out with a sentence which might as well serve as the epitaph of our civilisation: "Science hasn't yet figured out how to solve obesity." This collection of nine words speaks to the absurdity of our ideas, to the way in which we have deified The Science at the expense of science and enquiry itself, and to how so many of us refuse to take responsibility for our own lives. Only 20 years ago such an article could only have been satire. Not today, though/

What will serve us in maintaining self-awareness is what has defined us up until now: scepticism. Scepticism: it's precisely this that has revealed to us that those that make up our soul-crushing bureaucracies are hardly different to the contemptibles of the past. It's this that allows us to see that the masses are as docile as ever as they continue to offload responsibility to centralized power.

The power that claims to have a monopoly on access to The Science (whatever the hell that means) has followed the priestly caste of the Middle Ages that claimed a monopoly on access to God (whatever the hell THAT means). It is scepticism that leads us to recall that nothing and nobody has a monopoly on access to truth and that every individual is in a naturally fallen state, always capable of doing and being wrong. It reminds us that centralizing power only amplifies evil. For us, going forward, this means we should be encouraged to disperse power over the widest possible surface area. Indeed, in the earlier stages of the U.S. Empire with its esteeming of freedom we do have some sort of example to follow.

Jack Hadfield's article in the last Man's World inspires me to postulate that though it might be our confidence in what we do know that will drive us forward, it will be our understanding that we can't know everything that will keep us authentic. We must always remain sceptical of not only what's around us but of ourselves as well, and to the extent that we are always capable of changing our minds. It's no coincidence that our ever-energized sphere at present holds much of just this mentality, many of us having gone through intellectual and spiritual re-births. It will be our greatest challenge to sustain this.

After all, history always awaits at the next juncture, ready to make fools of us all.

Explore more of Adam the Poetrarch's writing at poemsontherun.com

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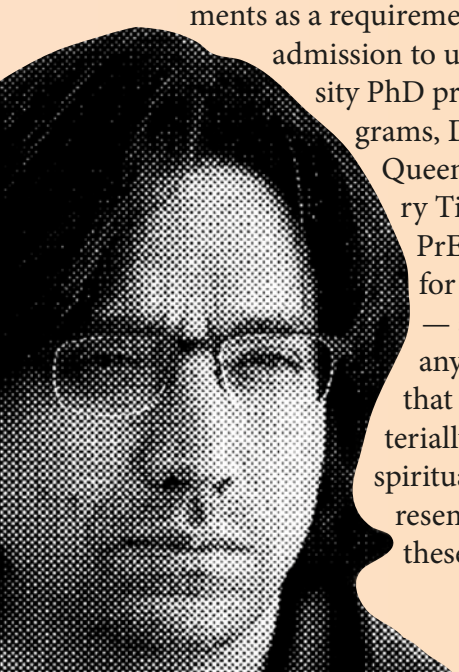
WINNING THE CULTURE WAR

The culture war is the only war you can win, says HOSTUS

Andrew Breitbart famously counselled conservatives in the US that politics are downstream of culture. He was wrong: politics and culture cannot be meaningfully distinguished. Especially when the stakes are existential, as they now are.

This error in thinking isn't the fault of the late Mr Breitbart — it's simply an error of accepting the technocratic frame. The belief that "social", "economic", or "foreign" policies can be chosen from a menu and applied to the real world. As though they were RPG stat modifiers without any second order effects or consequences.

In reality, you get exactly the culture which "policy" sees fit to subsidise. Epidemic levels of single motherhood, black girl magic in the cockpits of airliners, DEI statements as a requirement of admission to university PhD programs, Drag Queen Story Time, PrEP for dogs — and anything that materially or spiritually resembles these things — are all cultural features made possible through political agitation. You can't "just get the economy right" or "just get law and order right" when both the economy and the law have been hijacked to support the cultural programs of your enemy.



A turn towards the apolitical has been a defining factor of the "mainstream" right's retreat into the margins for as long as most of us have been alive. We are all aware of this, but we should take great pains to remember it — this is a losing strategy. It always will be. Indeed, the only circumstances under which anyone would cede such large amounts of territory in the first place are those of complete hopelessness.

Every victory is, by definition, the counterpart to a defeat. And the only possible path to "victory" for us implies that our Weltanschauung prevails entirely over that of the massed and greasy bugman armies of the other side.

Even if you have already acknowledged this fact intellectually, it probably still feels like a daunting prospect. Total victory doesn't seem very likely where we are now. But before you surrender to despair, I'd like you to consider something very important. To win, you only have to convince 5%.

The past few years — and in particular, COVID — have one central lesson for the man willing to learn it: most people are culturally, politically, morally, and socially inert. The NPC meme is a genuine and true statement about reality.

The overwhelming majority of the population has no substantive views of its own. It simply regards the current "consensus" as correct. If it's what everyone else thinks, it must be right. If it's currently law, it must be moral. They enquire no further than this.

Fortunately for you, they don't need to. If the "consensus" changes, they'll happily believe whatever it changes into. "Free minds" are the only element you need to persuade, and these are remarkably thin on the ground. I said 5% above. In reality, the number is likely much smaller. But even a fraction of this small number will be more than enough to get the job done.

With all that said, winning might be simple, but it certainly won't be easy. "Our" sphere, whatever you might like to call it, is still in its political infancy. The final victory might take decades of work to achieve, and we would be foolish not to expect tactical victories and defeats to occur along the way.

I want to say all of this in the hope that it will provide some encouragement and morale. At the moment, visible victories are few

and far between. But I also want to warn you against a very specific type of demoralisation. And to do that, we unfortunately need to talk about hobbits.

Curtis Yarvin's recent pronouncements on the issue of the culture war (framed as a conflict between hobbits and elves) put on full display one of the most consistent errors in his epistemology: he is an elitist who has a very confused idea as to the nature of power in human societies.

His hobbit/elf schema (which is really only a loose re-skin of the vaishiya/brahmin or morlock/eloi dichotomy he used years ago while writing Unqualified Reservations) does get one self-evident thing right: there is a segment of the population which is both unfit to rule, and for the most part has no interest in ruling.

Where his analysis fails is in his characterisation of the bounds of this group, and his definition of the other side of the coin, those who can rule.

Yarvin's "elves", by his own definitions, constitute an enormous group which at its greatest extent includes anyone who has ever graduated from some form of tertiary education. His most recent definition, "[those who have] fully entered modernity, [those] who live for self actualisation" is actually even more extreme, and almost precludes the existence of "hobbits" at all.

There is not a single person in any western country who has not "fully entered modernity". Not even the Amish can really make this claim. "Self actualisation", for its part, is a concept that's been in circulation for over 100 years, and in its academic conception is taken to be a goal towards which all humans strive innately. In spiritual terms, it is the drive to telos. In material terms, it is the drive to most fully express one's genetic programming. It cannot, therefore, be the province of any one social group.

Or, to put it another way, the hobbit at his grill is fully self actualised according to his own potential and temperament.

What Yarvin is in fact driving at is a basic distinction of character and spirit that might very well be a difference in basic biology. Most people simply do not have the intelligence, motivation, resources, or organisational capacity to rule themselves or anyone else. However, almost none of these people are in Yarvin's audience.

In fact many of these people fall under the umbrella of Yarvin's "elves". Most "elves" are not political, social, or cultural taste-makers, they are exactly as inert in these spheres as Yarvin believes hobbits to be.

The average state department or pentagon officer, the average college professor — to say nothing of the average college graduate — has no power whatsoever. They might be able to exercise power as the temporary deputies of those who do —provided they act according to their interests — but this is not the same as being in power, or holding power oneself.

A pawn is not a player. When the culture war is eventually won, most of Yarvin's "elves" will be nowhere to be found, because their convictions are not their own. They are the echo of the consensus, and they will just as eagerly echo the new consensus.

For all the trails they have blazed, the main flaw of Yarvin and his ilk is a tendency towards overcomplication. None of our present problems are unsolvable. None of our present enemies are beyond defeat. Perhaps most importantly, the "structure" of our system doesn't actually matter that much. The system is simply whatever the current ruling elite — the shapers of the culture —d esire it to be.

None of this is beyond change, but that change is not going to come from shadowy cadres of Yarvinite "dark elves".

(As a brief parenthetical: by Yarvin's own definition of what a "dark elf" is, an elf sympathetic to hobbit ends, isn't the very event he's describing as a hollow victory a textbook example of a dark elf op? His argument defeats itself.)

I believe the change will come from you. If you are reading this, the chances are you are fortunate enough to be one of the small portion of the population capable of genuine independent thought. Congratulations. It will be your privilege to suffer and triumph in the creation of a new culture.

By this I don't simply mean through the means of the arts; although the arts are an excellent vehicle for this as we've seen. The culture that will ultimately "win" the war is still in its infancy, forming slowly and haltingly, as a product of all of the actions we are choosing to take right now. I don't know exactly what form it will take, but neither does Yarvin, and nor does anyone else. But what I do know is that it will be wholly unlike anything what has come before it. You may yet live to see man made wonders beyond your aspirations.

You'll be cold

Because your hates

in the winter

government

you

WHO CARES ABOUT KLAUS SCHWAB?

It really doesn't matter who he is, says RAW EGG NATIONALIST

You can't help but feel for Klaus Schwab and the World Economic Forum. They want so desperately to ensure the internet is free of "misinformation" and "conspiracy content" – going so far as to recruit hundreds of thousands of "information warriors" to flag and remove such material – but they just seem to have this awful knack for… *coincidences*. And I don't mean any old coincidences either. We're talking about the kind of coincidences that would make even the most jaded tinfoil-hat-wearing 9/11 truther sit up and pay attention. I mean, holding a pandemic preparedness exercise (Event 201) just a few months before a genuine pandemic and, not only that, predicting virtually every aspect of what would happen, from the type of disease responsible to the unprecedented social restrictions that would be imposed – now *that's* a coincidence, right? And then, as if that wasn't enough, just a few months in to that pandemic, releasing a detailed book about it (*Covid-19: the Great Reset*) that confidently predicted its course, duration and effects… Well. Once might be considered a misfortune, but *twice*? That just looks like carelessness.

I don't mean to be facetious – too much. Nor, indeed, do I want to encourage even more speculation about an event – the Great Reset – which is already the subject of enormous amounts of the stuff. These things really may be crazy coincidences. Or they may not. Either way, it's impossible to tell whether the pandemic really was a plandemic, and in any case I think this is a distraction from more important tasks, like figuring out how to stop the globalists from rearranging the global food system in a manner that will make all our lives worse in ways we can only dare to imagine.

One of the main aims of my new book, *The Eggs Benedict Option*, is to provide an account of the Great Reset, and in particular the Great Reset plan for food, that sticks as closely as possible to verifiable, publicly accessible sources. Handily for me, there's a mountain of them. Klaus Schwab, the World Economic Forum and its partners like the EAT Foundation have published article after article, study after study and book after book laying out exactly what needs to be done, from increasing corporate control of the food supply through the use of genetically modified organisms and lab-grown meat, to ensuring that nobody on earth eats more than a quarter of an egg a day (yes, really!). This is one of the reasons why the Great Reset is not a conspiracy theory. Conspiracies, by their very nature, must be kept hidden. Try, for a moment, to imagine Guy Fawkes and his accomplices holding a huge conference in Davos about their plans to redesign the Houses of Parliament, or Brutus and co. pushing thinkpieces about how Caesar needs to be "retired" for the good of the Republic… Nope, not happening.

So the Great Reset is demonstrably not a conspiracy, and those who are trying to fight it by drawing attention to the writings and pronouncements of its advocates are demonstrably not conspiracy theorists either. It's hard not to get carried away, though, as I suggested in the opening paragraph, and one of the most visible focuses for speculation is obviously Klaus Schwab himself. This is an understandable tendency: when we see a plan, especially a grand plan, we seek a mastermind. And there, at the center of an intricate web that spans the globe sits . . . a strange little kraut with glasses, a bald head, and a turkey neck. I've referred to Klaus Schwab as a "thrift-store Palpatine" elsewhere, and truth is, I still don't quite know what to make of him. Evil genius? Figurehead? Distraction?

Space alien?

Does it even matter?

A lot of interest has been directed towards Schwab's supposed ties to the Rothschild family, something the WEF has been keen to debunk. Other details

about his history are less subject to uncertainty, but like I said it's not obvious what to make of them. A recent article on *Unlimited Hangout*, for instance, dug deep into the Schwab family history and turned up connections to the atomic-weapons programs of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa. Here's what the article has to say, in brief.

Before and then during the Second World War, Klaus' father Eugen managed a factory at Ravensburg for the Swiss firm Escher-Wyss, which was intimately involved with the Nazi war effort. This involvement included the production of heavy water, a key ingredient for atomic bombs. At the factory in Ravensburg, under Eugen Schwab's management, forced labor was used throughout the war, and a special camp was maintained on the premises for the workers, who included civilians and POWs. After the war, Eugen continued to work for Escher-Wyss and to ascend the world of German manufacturing, apparently without any repercussions.

In 1967, Klaus completed his studies at Harvard, where he was taught by Henry Kissinger, and went to work for his father's old company, which soon after became Sulzer-Escher-Wyss. Under the younger Schwab, the newly reorganized company began to move away from its roots in manufacturing to become a technology corporation. This included nuclear power, and it would appear that during Klaus' tenure at the firm, he was involved in early attempts by the South African government to develop its own nuclear weapons. Escher-Wyss' involvement in the Nazi atomic-weapons program may have been one reason the South African government sought the company out.

Klaus Schwab's tenure at Escher-Wyss lasted only three years. In 1971 he founded the European Management Symposium, which would later become the World Economic Forum. One of the key influences in his decision to found the Symposium was the Club of Rome, an early and highly influential think-tank made up of members of the global scientific and financial elite, much like the World Economic Forum today. As is well known, one of the Club's main preoccupations was global population reduction. In its 1972 book *The Limits of Growth*, for instance, it warns that "if the world's consumption patterns and population growth continued at the same high rates of the time, the earth would strike its limits within a century." One of the authors of the book, Aurelio Peccei, delivered a speech about it at the third meeting of the European Management Symposium, in 1973.

So what does this all add up to? Johnny Vedmore, the author of the piece, believes we're dealing with a long-held eugenic dream passed down from father to son:

"In the case of Klaus Schwab himself, it appears that he has helped to launder relics of the Nazi era, i.e. its nuclear ambitions and its population control ambitions, so as to ensure the continuity of a deeper agenda."

Maybe.

Maybe not.

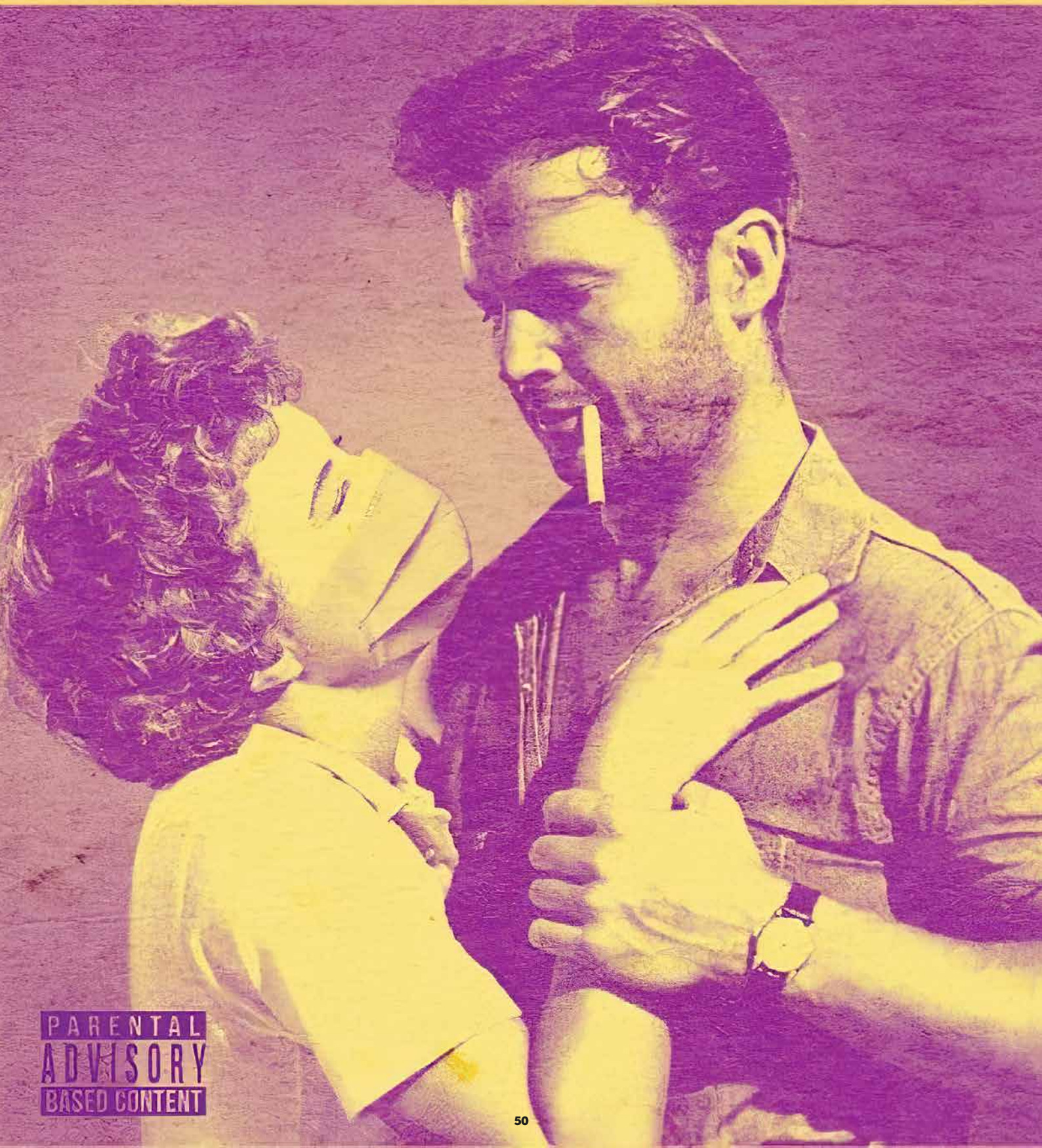
I think there are better questions we can ask of this evidence – better because we can actually answer them. Why do the ultimate motivations of Klaus Schwab, or any other globalist, matter? What difference does it make whether the World Economic Forum is doing what it's doing to fulfil some "deeper agenda" involving nuclear weapons and eugenics, or simply to make as much money and have as much power as possible? It's not as if the things we already know about the Great Reset aren't bad enough without adding a Dr Evil figure to the mix. *Oh, they want us to own nothing, have no privacy, live in a pod and eat bugs? Well that doesn't sound too bad – unless of course there's some evil mastermind of an ancient European bloodline who wants that to happen. That would be too much for me!* Truth is, we have all the reason in the world to oppose the globalists on the basis of what we can readily know right now, at this very moment. It's that simple.

I'm not saying that the deeper moral and intellectual roots of the Great Reset aren't important, because they clearly are. This is something Alexander Dugin shows in his book *The Great Awakening vs The Great Reset*, and that I consider at length in *The Eggs Benedict Option*. Knowing that the Great Reset has its own history and metaphysics helps us to understand what is happening, why and, of course, how we can fight it. But when it comes to Klaus Schwab, there are many better things we could be doing than trying to get to the bottom of who – or what – he is.

The Eggs Benedict Option is out now directly via Antelope Hill, or via Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

RAW EGG NATIONALIST PRESENTS

MAN'S WORLD 2021



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INFILTRATION WON'T WORK

The system is gay and will crush you, says JOSIAH LIPPINCOTT

Perhaps there is among you one of those human types who can successfully enter the belly of the monkeypox-infested bureaucratic bunkhouse — cloaking your true thoughts and beliefs for years as you slowly scramble atop the pile of HR maneaters, DMV ladies on break, and drooping manboobed administrators that make up the modern state — in order that you, at the right moment, may strike a blow for truth and justice.

Such a man is rare.

At the very least, I do not believe it can be model for the right-wing as a whole, specifically for those who lack the requisite nature for such a task. We always are who we are. We must work with what we have. The American Right is filled with those, like me, who are descendants of Scots-Irish, German, and Anglo settlers: all groups that are notoriously bad at spying, doubletalk, and lying.

It does not help that America's institutions are virtually invulnerable from internal hostile takeover. When I hear talk of trying to infiltrate institutions, parties, etc., I am deeply skeptical. The idea of making the FBI friendly to the Right or the New York Times not gay, sounds as believable as Russians successfully conspiring to make the Red Army fascist in the 30s or turn Pravda into a hotbed of reactionary sentiment. The "system" under which we live — the vast bloated human resources bureaucracy that governs the earth — will not allow such a thing. That is by design. This giant administrative biomass prevents any kind of accountability to the public.

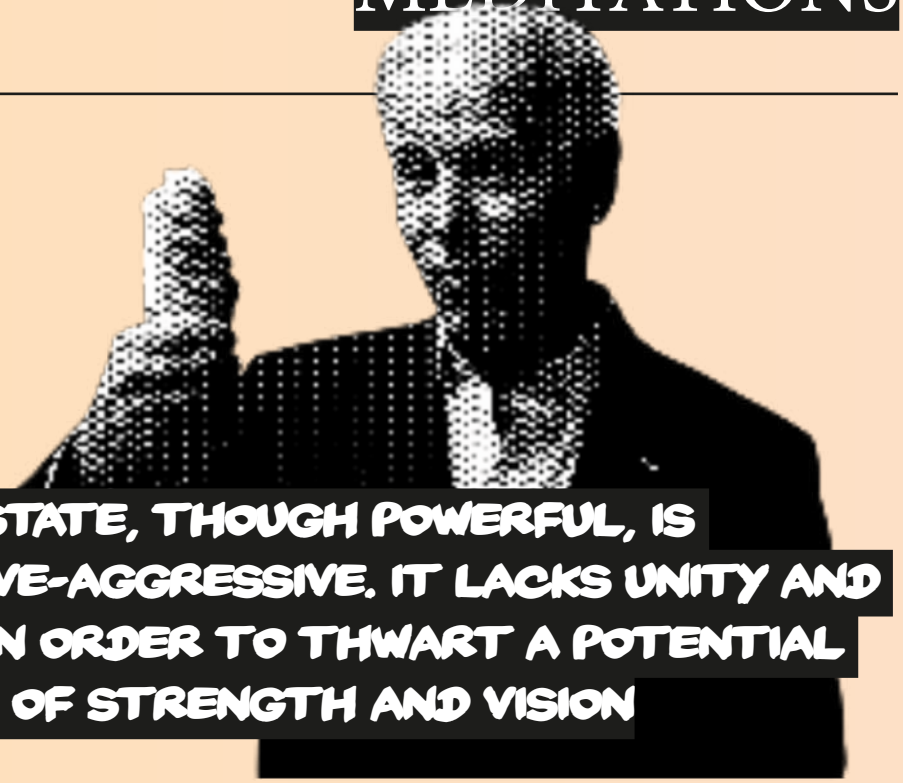
The death of the unitary executive in American political life is a clear example of this phenomenon. Virtually every city in America, for instance, uses some version of the "manager-council" mode of government. The office of mayor, insofar as it exists at all, is generally a functionary with little real power to hire and fire employees or to enforce the law.

For instance, in my own town of Hillsdale, Michigan, the city manager is unelected and makes well over $100,000 a year. He has a contract that keeps him in power for nearly a decade. The city council, on the other hand, while elected, has no meaningful salary and faces constant turnover. The bureaucracy — the manager, clerks, lawyers, etc. — are a faction unto themselves. To give one example, the city council prohibited the recreation department from buying an ice cream machine for the local park snack stand. To do this, they ruled that all transactions over $10,000 had to be voted on by the city council. So, the recreation bureaucrats simply split the purchase of the machine into two transactions and bought it anyway.

All of American life is like this at every level of power. In Michigan, the Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State are all elected positions. We have a tripartite executive in which there is no final accountability for the enforcement of the laws. When I was in the Corps, I never once saw the battalion commander come down to the offices of the lower echelons. He was always in meetings, always busy, always somewhere else. When Biden says he did not know of the Mar-a-Lago raid, I believe him. The only decision he is allowed to make each day is about what flavor pudding cup he gets for lunch. Make no mistake, Donald Trump was in a similar boat. When he ordered American troops to leave Syria, the Pentagon went into revolt. One must not also forget the coup after January 6, in which members of Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff worked together to prevent Trump from exercising his lawful authority.

Alexander Hamilton describes the Presidency in *The Federalist*: "Energy in the Executive is a leading character in the definition of good government." He goes on to argue that the qualities of energy are unity of powers, duration in office, adequate provision for personal support, and possession of competent powers.

This type of office does not exist today and this is



THE MODERN DEEP STATE, THOUGH POWERFUL, IS FEMININE AND PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE. IT LACKS UNITY AND ENERGY PRECISELY IN ORDER TO THWART A POTENTIAL TAKEOVER BY A MAN OF STRENGTH AND VISION

intentionally so.

The Founders' vision of American government was manly and assertive. This is why they speak of energy, unity, strength, and power. The modern deep state, though powerful, is feminine and passive-aggressive. It lacks unity and energy precisely in order to thwart a potential takeover by a man of strength and vision. It is stultifying and bloated on purpose.

Infiltration of this system by manly and assertive young men is almost certain to be unsuccessful. These types will be shunted aside, pressured, and ground to dust wherever possible. I saw this in my own time in the Marine Corps. The Corps shuffles officers and personnel around constantly. Every two or three years one can expect another "Permanent Change of Station," ostensibly intended to encourage a "broad range of career experience" but more importantly, to prevent the formation of tightly knit units loyal to strong leaders.

Though a competent officer, well-liked by many of my peers, and strictly professional with my superiors, I was "not right" for the institution. They could smell it on me. I was, for instance, forced to submit to multiple "talking tos" from higher ranking officers. One complaint — lodged by a morbidly obese enlisted female Marine who felt I had smirked at her — ended with an hour-long meeting with said female Marine in which her commander, a Major, concluded by insisting to me that though he couldn't prove I had done anything wrong (I hadn't), it was important to ensure that she felt "listened to" because this was a "new Marine Corps."

Every institution in American life is spiritually gay.

The only solution is to clear the ground — to "deconstruct" the system, as the post-modernists say, and start over. Christopher Rufo gave a wonderful talk at Hillsdale College this past year entitled "Laying Siege to Our Institutions." This is the right mindset.

We cannot save our corrupt regime from the inside. The Right does not have the personnel, time, or unity of purpose to stage its own decades-long march through the institutions. Instead, we must actively work to undermine their legitimacy and purpose — especially when it comes to those organs that act as the sword and shield of the regime. The FBI is the enemy. The Pentagon is the enemy. The NSA is the enemy.

The liberal ruling class depends on white men with guns to secure itself. It is imperative that we deny it access to this crucial resource. Demoralization propaganda and spiritual warfare in the public square are critical to this effort. We must make it so that the toadies of the regime face constant embarrassment and mockery everywhere they turn. The work of the anons on Twitter and elsewhere is of the utmost importance in this regard.

There is a place, too, for those like me, Christopher Rufo, and others who write openly under their own name. There are dangers, of course. It is much easier to corrupt a man with money and honor when

COMING SOON NETFILX
VIKANGZ
VALHALLA IS CALLING

you know his name. But the men of the Right should not reflexively fear to associate themselves with right-wing principles in public. The costs of explicitly identifying oneself as a "true patriot" and "radical moderate centrist," as I consider myself, are not intrinsically prohibitive.

I believe in the need for a return of industry at home, an end to the empire abroad, and dramatic cuts to immigration. I think the government should outlaw genital mutilation of children and crack down on violent crime. These are explicitly right-wing positions, yes, but they are also popular positions. I do not fear associating myself with them.

Infiltration is of the utmost difficulty, but outright assaults on the weak points of the ideological front can work well. Donald Trump's campaign in 2015 is the model. He may not have been able to govern effectively but the blow he struck in the spiritual war was of the utmost importance.

Boldly stating the truth is an aristocratic trait.

I am not suggesting that this openness is a model for everyone on the Right. Nor am I suggesting that young men should not go to college or get a high-paying or influential job if it is available. But we also should not delude ourselves. The pressing task is not to infiltrate the institutions or to grift off them, but to bring them down. A man who depends on a thing for his livelihood creates an incentive for himself *not* to work for its destruction.

It is simply in the nature of many young men to work hard, even when such work is not good. Men who have been bred for generations to hold duty and truthfulness in the highest regard will find it hard *not* to empower the very system that desires to destroy them. Their conscientiousness is a weakness.

The Interahamwe Left and its murderous rhetoric is a global threat that is becoming more openly radical. It is necessary for some to oppose them in the open and for others to work from the shadows—but all must aim for the same target.

Strength, friendship, and discipline are far greater assets in this spiritual fight than credentials, degrees, and corner offices. It is not necessary for the Right to sit in the seat of power in order to undermine it. Iron is more important than gold. In our time, friendship, strength, and manly virtue are more needed than money and access. The real source of power lies not within the regime, but outside it.

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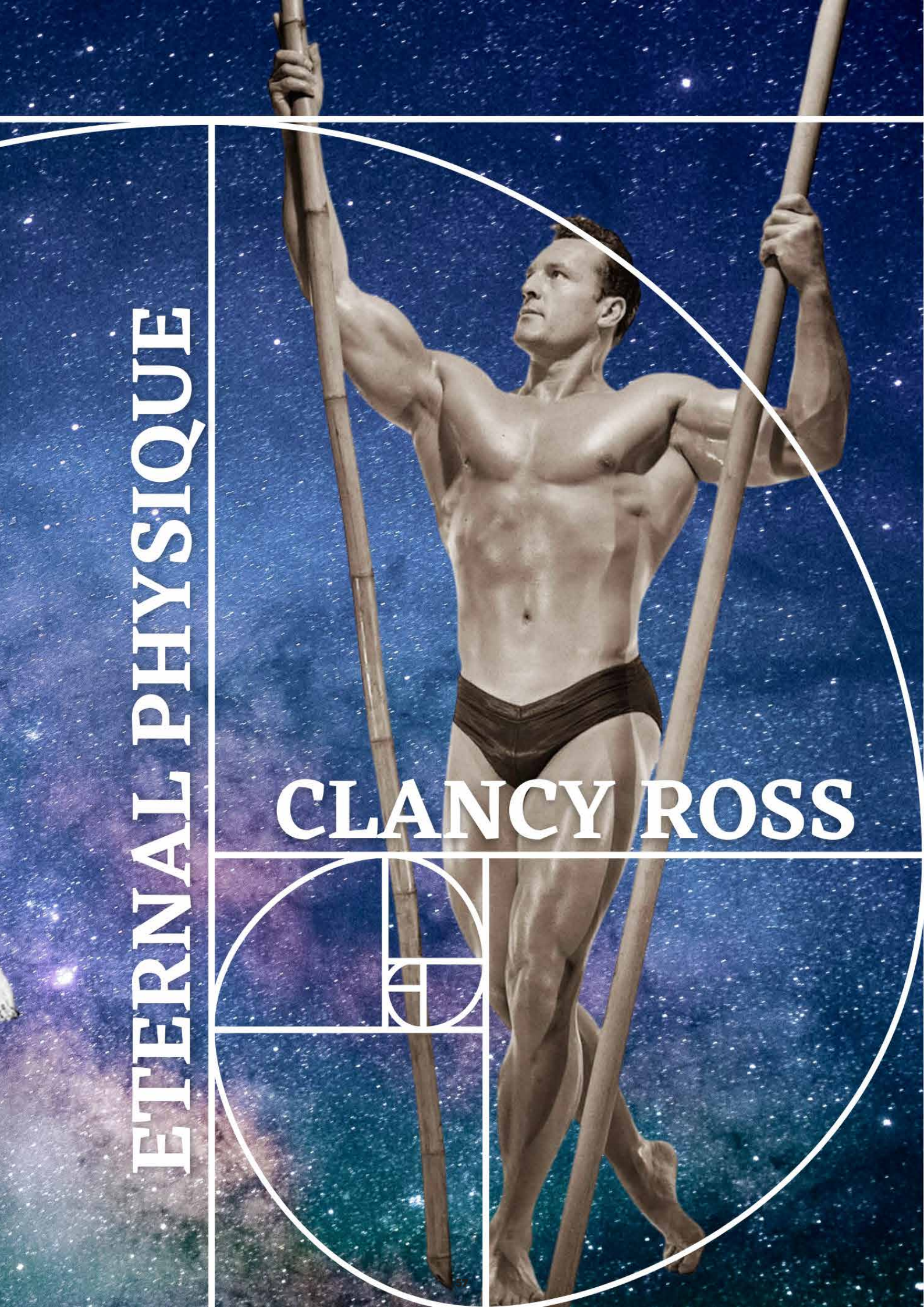

ETERNAL PHYSIQUE
CLANCY ROSS

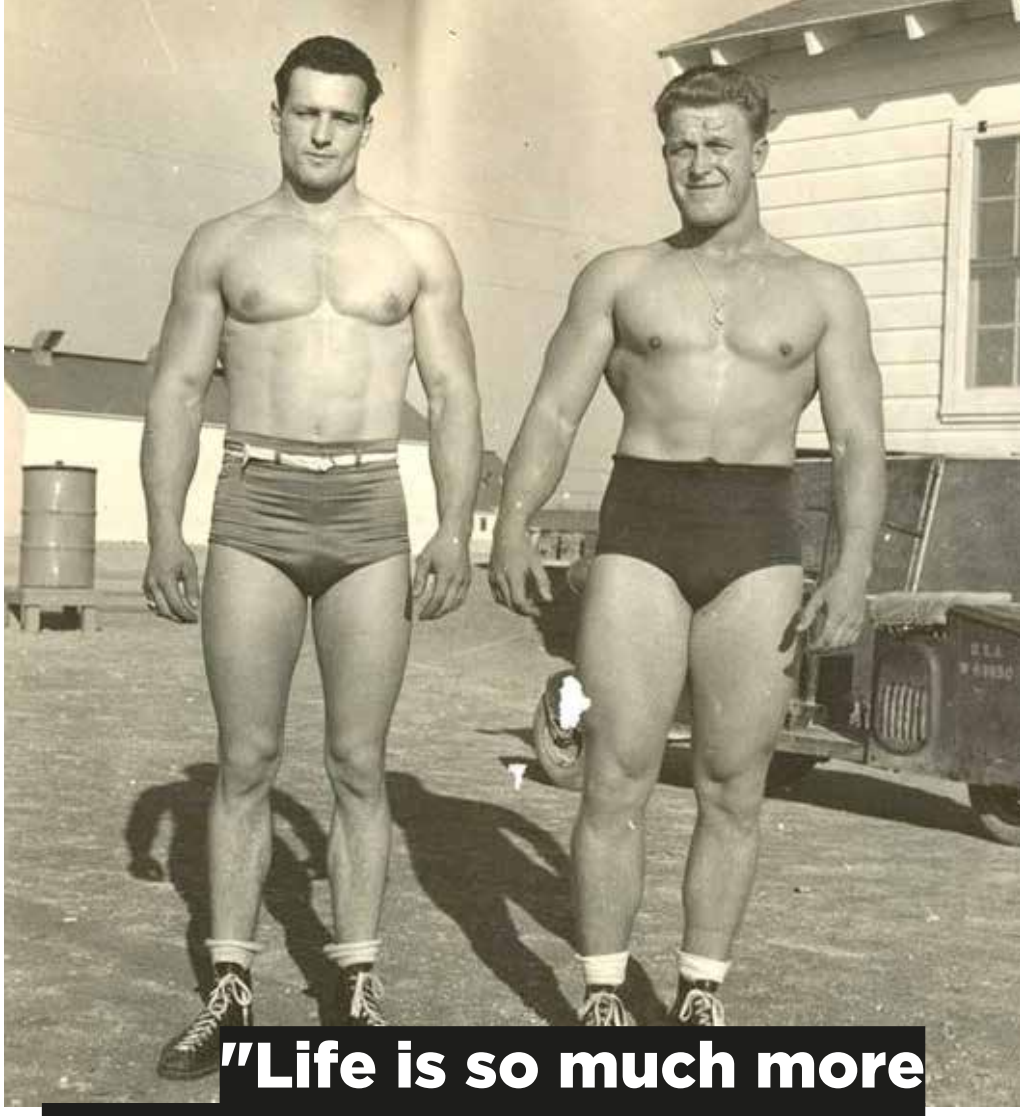
The man who came to be known as the Oakland Oak, for his enormous shoulders and all-round size, was born Clarence Ross, on October 26 1926. The second of four children, Clarence was taken into care as a young child when his mother died suddenly. Bounced around from foster home to foster home, young Clarence didn't have the best start in life, but the hardship he endured only made him stronger and more determined to succeed in life. As well as serving his country during the Second World War, Ross would go on to become a champion bodybuilder — one of only two men, the other being John Grimek, to defeat the legendary Steve Reeves in competition.

At school, Ross was picked on for his skinny frame and flat feet. Rather than letting it get him down, he decided to do something about it, enlisting for as many sports as he could. By the age of 17, he had graduated on to weightlifting, using the famous York Barbell Course to add a solid 15lbs of mass to his body.

Ross enlisted in the Air Force in late 1942 and was immediately selected as a weightlifting instructor. It was during this time that he met Corporal Leo Stern, who would have a tremendous influence on his development into a bodybuilder. Stern showed Ross how to combine heavy weightlifting movements with higher volume training to build mass. In effect, this was an early version of the "powerbuilder" system that would be popularised by massive powerlifters like Roger Estep and the strongest bodybuilders of the Golden Age, like Chuck Sipes and Franco Columbo. Under Stern's guidance, Ross added another 35lbs of mass to his frame, as well as well as serious power. At various points in his career, Ross would overhead pres 315lbs, snatch 280lbs, deadlift 650lbs and bench press 385lbs for 10 reps.

"Building good health and developing a muscular body is the world's most fascinating hobby"

With the war over, Ross began to compete in bodybuilding competitions. He won the AAU



"Life is so much more worth living when a person is strong and healthy"

Mr America in 1945, and then the Mr USA competition in 1948. He entered the 1949 Mr America contest, but placed second to John Grimek, another early bodybuilder who has featured in Eternal Physique. Grimek was famously nicknamed "the Glow", in reference to how brightly he stood out against his competition on stage. He dominated early bodybuilding to such an extent that a special rule was created for the Mr America that prevented him from competing again.

The 1949 Mr America was notable because it also featured Steve Reeves, who came third, behind Grimek and Ross.

Ross made a powerful comeback to competitive bodybuilding in 1955, when he competed in the Mr Universe, in London. Although he won the tall class, he was beaten overall by Leo Robert. His failure to win the title is often attributed to the long journey across the Atlantic and to his having caught the flu just before the competition. Whatever the case, Ross retired gracefully from competition.

Like other early bodybuilders, Ross appeared on the silver screen in a number of films, including 1949's *So You Want To Be a Muscle Man?* He played a strongman whose physique catches the eye of the main character's wife, leading to a weightlifting showdown which the main character fails in spectacular style.

Ross also appeared in numerous adverts and on the front covers of magazines like *Muscle Power* and *The Reg Park Journal* (which, of course, later became the original *Man's World*). ■

CLANCY ROSS

Born: October 26 1926

Died: 30 April 2008

Height: 5' 10"

Weight: 215lbs

Arms: 19"

Waist 29"

MESTIZAJE EN MAN'S WORLD

THE CURSE OF KNO

THE LIFE AND STRANGE TIMES OF RICHARD HOSKINS

WLEDGE

From witchraft and murder in the Congo, to child sacrifice and elite paedophilia in Britain, criminologist and religious scholar Richard Hoskins stared into the abyss — and the abyss well and truly stared back into him. STONE AGE HERBALIST tells the story of a man whose life was touched by evil.

It's hard to imagine what a modern curse would look like today, how that would affect your life, but the life of criminologist and religious scholar Richard Hoskins comes as close as we might possibly get. His story is an almost unbelievable tale of sorrow, witchcraft, murder and adventure, the kind of life which one associates with a bygone era. Hoskins' biography touches on some of the most bizarre events in recent British history, from investigating Yoruba human sacrifice in London to VIP Satanic sex-rings. He has lost three of his children in tragic and disturbing circumstances and undergone hormone therapy and the removal of his testicles through NHS gender affirmative care, an act he regrets. A haunted figure, a man half in touch with the supernatural and demonic. Let us explore this, a life most cursed.

Twins In The Congo

Hoskins was born in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire in 1964. His schooling led him to Sandhurst Military Academy where he gained a Special Short Service Commission in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment. Not much is known about his early life, but his story really begins when he married a medic, a woman called Sue, and went with her to the Congo in 1986.

She was working for the church, providing basic medical care and vaccinations to the most rural communities, and Hoskins was excited to be travelling and working alongside her, a great new adventure for a newlywed couple. Kinshasa was not what he expected. Warned that Sue would be kidnapped at the local market and sold into slavery in Dubai, and rattled by the flagrant aggression and corruption of the local regime thugs, he was pleasantly surprised when he landed in Bolobo, a small town on the Congo River in the western-most region of the country. The local Bantu tribe, the Bateki, welcomed them both with open arms, teaching them to speak Lingala, how to pilot a dugout canoe and hunt with handmade muskets. Hoskins fully immersed himself in the culture and his work, installing a solar powered vaccine fridge and carving trails through the bush for their battered Land Rover. He learnt about the Congolese belief in kindoki, a form of low-level witchcraft which afflicted people from time to time and the nganga healers, who would restore ailments both physical and spiritual with herbal remedies and animal sacrifices.

In 1987 Sue fell pregnant and both were troubled by the late scan which revealed twins, one positioned for a dangerous breech birth. Twins in the Congo, as in other parts of Africa, are both revered and feared, believed to be more in touch with the spiritual world. The eldest twin is always known as Mbo and the youngest as Mpia. Distressingly one twin was born dead, amid a frightening and primal labour, far away from the benefits of a hospital. The second twin, premature and sickly, miraculously survived the night. They named her Abigail.

They briefly returned to Britain in 1988, where Abigail was declared fit and healthy, but on returning to their work in Bolobo Hoskins learnt that the villagers were worried about their daughter. He was approached alone by a man called Tata Mpia, himself a surviving twin and given a warning:

'But . . .what's this to do with my Abigail? You said she was being called? What . . . what do you mean by that?' 'Ah.' Tata Mpia nodded his head slowly. 'She is a twin. She is a Mpia – a younger twin – like me.' I felt the heat of Abigail's fever on my own forehead. 'Twins have a special power, Mr Richard. They call to each other and you must listen to their call. Mbo is calling your Mpia to come and join her in the shadowlands. I am sure of it.' 'Her twin sister? Calling her? But she's—' I stopped myself. 'No, Mr Richard,' Tata Mpia said gently. 'Mbo is not dead. That is the thing I am trying to say to you. She is one of the living dead. And she is calling out to her twin sister, calling her to the world of the living dead.

His worst fears were to come true. Both Hoskins and his wife began to feel that something was wrong. They heard distressed voices calling out sometimes, Abigail seemed full of life but also haunted by something. As Hoskins recalls, in one of his most chilling anecdotes in an already unpleasant book:

'Abigail?' I stepped towards her. 'What are you up to?' She turned her head, and the expression on her small face – normally as bright as a new flower – made me stop dead and lifted the hairs on the back of my neck. There was something in her eyes I had never seen before. Something that made her look old beyond her years. Without a sound, she turned away from me to stare out of the window again. I realized then what held her attention so completely. This was the only point in the house from which it was possible to see the graveyard.

Tata Mpia urged Hoskins to find a nganga and have him perform a sacrifice, to placate the soul of his dead child, but Hoskins refused. He recounts watching a similar ritual and felt that he could not go down that path, no matter how tempting. Abigail died in her sleep shortly afterwards, peacefully

and with no explanation. Hoskins was overcome with grief. Burying his second child next to the first with shaking hands he felt a hand on his shoulder, the village elder - 'Mr Richard,' he said, 'now you are truly an African.'

The pair came back to the UK shortly afterwards, battling with their demons. Hoskins was privately tortured by the thought that he could have spared Abigail by ordering a sacrifice, he never told Sue about Tata Mpia's suggestion. They attempted to salvage their lives and had another child, a boy called David in January of 1990. Despite this nascent familial bliss, they were drawn back to the Congo, where they continued working until the country became too dangerous for them to stay. In the autumn of 1991 an explosion of violence rocked the country, as rebel soldiers demanded their wages and went on a looting spree through Kinshasa. Sue and David fled to South Africa and were evacuated to Britain. Hoskins attempted to keep their medical centre running, but was forced to flee across the Congo River in a canoe, under a hail of bullets.

Finding themselves back home again and with Sue expecting another child, they seemed to live in two worlds. Becoming ever more drawn into his faith, Hoskins successfully applied to Oxford to read theology, but spent a month in 1992 helping the UN coordinate supply lines from Kinshasa to Bolobo. The UN offered him a job, working on the Congo-Rwanda border, as the country rapidly spiralled into warfare and mass murder. Wisely, he refused, and came back home to continue his studies. Their next daughter Elspeth was over a year old and Hoskins was happy and relieved to dedicate himself to his studies. He achieved a doctorate from King's College London, but at this point he and Sue were practically strangers to one another. The intense grief, the travels and turmoil of their lives, combined with differing views on their religious convictions, had resulted in them both retreating into their inner lives. They divorced and separated when Hoskins was offered a lectureship in African religions at Bath Spa University in 1999. Despite having experienced enough grief and hardship to last a lifetime, Hoskins had no idea what the future had in store for him.

The Boy In The River

It was an IT consultant on his way home from work who noticed it first. A strange dummy-like figure covered in a red-orange cloth. After realising what it was and phoning for the police he stood watching as a team fished the torso of a young boy out of the Thames. He was missing his head, arms and legs and had been clothed only in a pair of girl's shorts, bright orange in colour. The police were baffled. The pathologist identified him as a 7-8 year old African male. His limbs and head had been expertly removed and his neck bore a strange surgical wound from back to front where he had been held upside-down and drained of his blood. Hoskins was a senior lecturer at this point, one of the few experts in Britain on African religious practices. He had started a new relationship with a student called Faith and the pair had moved in together after a research trip to his old stomping ground in the Congo. Scotland Yard was convinced the boy's death was connected in some way to an African religious practice, they tossed out words like voodoo, juju and muti, a South African practice which, in its darkest forms, involved using the internal organs of a person for their medical and spiritual power. In the absence of any identification the police had named the boy Adam.

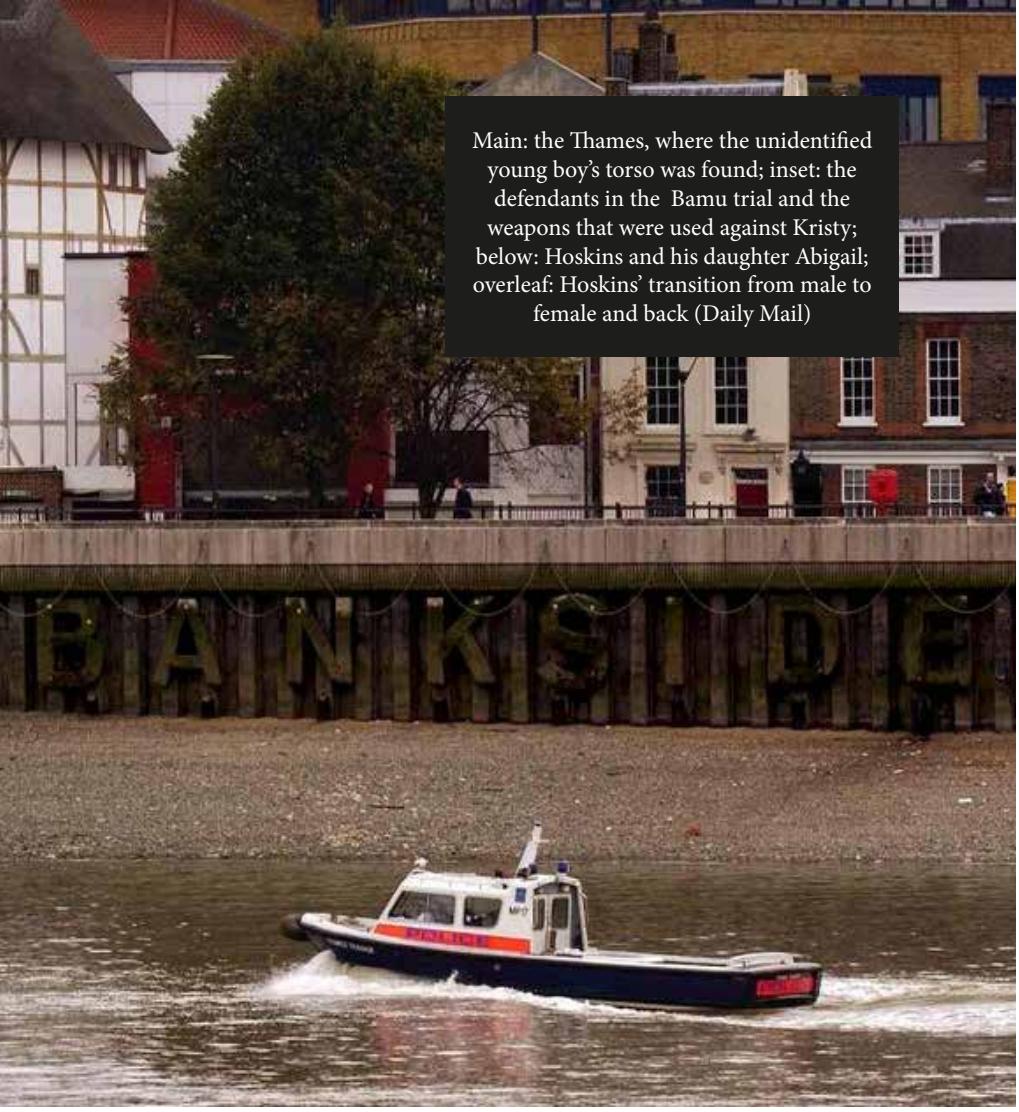
To do full justice to Hoskin's involvement in the Adam case would be to rewrite his book, *The Boy in the River*, which details his specialist expertise and research into West African sacrificial practices. Adam was eventually identified as a Nigerian, based on the new technique of assessing bone and teeth isotopes, a first in British criminal history. His stomach revealed that he had been fed a vile potion, made up of charcoal, plants and animal bones. Significantly the forensic team discovered the potion contained the Calabar bean, a toxic legume which was traditionally used as a witchcraft ordeal in Nigeria and surrounding countries. If one vomited after ingestion they were guilty, if they died they were innocent. In very small amounts the bean acted to paralyse and numb the victim. A gruesome picture was eventually painted of the boy's fate. With his orange shorts and final deposition into the river, Hoskins could infer that the ritual was linked to the Yoruba people. The shorts themselves were only sold in Germany and Austria, providing a clue as to his movements before his death. It would seem that Adam had been somehow smuggled into the country, starved and then force-fed the paralysing concoction, before having his throat slit and his blood drained. His limbs and head were removed and kept and his torso dressed and put into the Thames. Who committed this atrocity and why are unknown to this day. Despite the police travelling to South Africa and personally requesting Nelson Mandela's help in broadcasting the crime, no developments or leads emerged.

For Hoskins this case caused painful old memories to resurface, connecting the death of a child,

SOON IT WILL ALL BE CLEAN

Africa and sacrifice. His mental fragility became evident as he was bombarded with threats from angry Yorubans, furious he had mentioned their religion on the news in connection with the murder. He even had a teacher from Yorkshire phone him, shrieking that he was undermining 'racial harmony'. His life with Faith became strained as he worked long hours, absorbed in memories and pain. One day she eventually confided that a souvenir African death mask they had bought on holiday together was causing her immense distress:

Just then Faith pushed the door ajar and peeped in. She looked uneasy. 'You're going to think I'm nuts. It's that damned mask. There's something weird about it.' I'd never liked the Chokwe death mask. I'd been uncomfortable when Faith had seen it on a trader's table in the Brazzaville market. It would have been shaped around a dead girl's face so that whoever wore it thereafter might draw up the spirit of the deceased. It was strangely beautiful, but the first night we'd had it in the room with us we'd both had chilling nightmares. We'd hung it on the wall of our home in Bath, and occasionally, when I'd been working late, the thing had given me the creeps. 'I put it up on my study wall when I unpacked,'she said. 'And I've been getting blinding headaches ever since.' She hadn't told me before because she couldn't see how her headaches could possibly have anything to do with the mask. But as soon as she took it out of the room, the headaches stopped. As an experiment, she'd passed the thing on to her mother, for whom it had no connotations. But her mother had started to have awful nightmares in which the mask featured, and now she wouldn't have it in the house. 'And she smells,' Faith went on, 'of wood smoke. She always did a bit. But sometimes it's really strong. Almost choking.' I didn't like the way Faith had called the mask 'she', as if it had a personality of its own. That wasn't something I wanted to consider.



Main: the Thames, where the unidentified young boy's torso was found; inset: the defendants in the Bamu trial and the weapons that were used against Kristy; below: Hoskins and his daughter Abigail; overleaf: Hoskins' transition from male to female and back (Daily Mail)

He even had a teacher from Yorkshire phone him, shrieking that he was undermining 'racial harmony'

Progress was slow on the Adam case. Eventually a Yoruba woman called Joyce Osagiede was arrested in Glasgow. She was wanted in Germany for immigration crimes and her evidence led to a joint Italian, Irish and British police operation which busted an international child trafficking ring based out of Benin City in Nigeria, where Adam was from.

Child Witches in London

By 2003 Hoskins was a man much in demand. Police forces across the UK began to call him for advice regarding any crime with a religious or occultic bent. He worked on the savage murder of Jodi Jones in Scotland, before being handed the case file for a Congolese child witchcraft case in London - Child B. The story of Child B is a disturbing glimpse into modern multicultural Britain: an Angolan war orphan, smuggled into the UK by her aunt and brutally tortured by her and her friends who believed she was possessed by kindoki. This wasn't Hoskin's tame jungle kindoki, this was a new and mutated form which had arisen in the darkness of the Congolese Civil Wars. Rather than kindoki being a diffuse but mostly mild form of bad spiritual energy, the new revamped version had blended with a sadistic form of Christianity, where children in particular were held to be possessed agents of the Devil.

For 8-year-old Child B this meant her guardians had beaten her, tortured her with knives and rubbed chili pepper extract into her eyes, as well as refusing her all food and drink for days. For Hoskins this was to become his new reality, and he became obsessed with finding out exactly what was happening in London. His blood ran cold when a limp-wristed council lawyer phoned him and sheepishly asked if he would sanction a child being sent back to the Congo to undergo an exorcism. Incensed, he demanded the council pay for him to go to the exact church the child was destined for in Kinshasa. To his amazement, they agreed.

In February of 2004 he flew out on a erstwhile fact-finding mission, discovering to his horror that the Congo he knew had been twisted into something unrecognisable. Tens of thousands of street children, some lying dead in the road, crowded the city. Churches were holding many of them in metal pens and sheds. They were starved, mistreated and forced to undergo violent and frightening 'deliverance' rituals, to cast out the demons. Hoskins returned again in 2005, this time with a camera crew, attempting to locate a small boy called Londres, who had disappeared from Britain. Despite nearly being torn apart by a mob during a street funeral, the team found the boy, but they could do little to help. With casework mounting in the UK, Hoskins was called to be an expert witness in the Child B case. His testimony that kindoki was a sincere belief, but one which had been warped over the past few decades, was in-

strumental in putting the accused behind bars.

In his fixation on child witches, his relationship with Faith began to crumble. Sensing it was near the end, he threw caution to the wind and abandoned his work, utterly despondent at the state of UK law enforcement and the reality of child suffering in the Congo. He sold their London flat and moved with Faith to Devon, near her parent's farm, where they had a son in 2007 - Silas. Four happy years ensued, a scene of rural bliss, until a police officer managed to track him down in 2011. Another child had been murdered in London. They suspected it was a kindoki case. Unbeknownst to Hoskins, he was about to walk into possibly the worst case of child abuse in British criminal history: the torture and murder of 15 year old Kristy Bamu. The Bamu children, Congolese in origin, had been invited by their eldest sister to come to London for Christmas. They arrived into a nightmare. Their sister's boyfriend, Eric Bikubi, immediately accused the children of being witches. A three day horror scene unfolded as Bikubi beat and starved the children until they confessed, but Kristy Bamu refused. After Kristy wet the bed from sheer terror and panic, Bikubi turned his attention to the teenage boy. Forcing Kristy's siblings to help, he rained down on Kristy a frenzy of violence - knocking his teeth out with a hammer, shoving a metal bar down his throat, smashing ceramic tiles across his head, mutilating his ears with pliers. At the trial the court handlers had to use two trolleys to cart in the number of makeshift weapons used on the boy. Finally, Bikubi ordered the children into the bath where he granted Kristy's last plea - "let me die". He made his brothers and sisters sit on his chest until he drowned, whereupon he sprinkled them all with the water in an act of purification. At the trial the barrister noted the sibling's disgust at their eldest sister's refusal to intervene:

'And then, when Kristy staggered across the room, blood pouring'– Altman paused, betraying his own distress for the first time – 'all you could say to your own fifteen-year-old brother, who was dying in front of you, was, "Don't sit on the sofa, or you might spoil it . . ."'

Yet again Hoskins had been dragged into another case of Congolese witchcraft and the death of a child, he had been chained to the country and seemed fated to be gripped by its pain.

In August of 2011 he returned, yet again, to Kinshasa, this time with another TV company to document the deteriorating situation of its children. After battling with a cold-hearted pastor to give a small toddler a glass of water, in defiance of the fast ordered by the church, he vowed never to return. He would again take the stand as an expert on Congolese religion in the Bamu trial, outraged that Bikubi was attempting to plead insanity as a defence. At this point in his story his autobiography ends, with a despairing reflection on the state of affairs:

I didn't believe that Europe was just seeing a momentary overspill of misguided religious fundamentalism. Something much worse was beginning to flourish beneath the farcical ignorance and superficiality of the pan-European multicultural agenda. Children were being trafficked and used for benefit fraud, sold into sex slavery and subjected to physical and mental abuse. Porous national borders, splintered churches, broken family ties and a fundamental lack of understanding and communication amongst the relevant authorities had fostered a litany of depravity. Victoria Climbié, Child B and now Kristy Bamu were unlikely to be the only victims.

Sex and Gender

So far we've been following Hoskins' life through his own published words, in his book. But his life after Kristy Bamu was anything but easy. What he didn't mention in his book was the fate of his children from his first marriage. It appears that his son, David, was not a well man, and at age 19 had climbed an electricity pylon and touched the 33,000 volt cable. After 42 days in hospital Sue made the decision, alone it seems, to switch off his life support. Some time after 2011 he and Faith also parted ways, leaving him fully alone with his thoughts. Hoskins, clearly a traumatised and

Children's book of the year 2022
We've All Got Monkeypox!
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broken individual, fell down the Youtube transgender rabbit-hole and became convinced that taking oestrogen might help him feel better. He purchased some from a dark web vendor based in Vanuatu. The side effects drove him to seek medical help and he was 'fast-tracked', in his own words, through the NHS gender clinic in 2015 and began to call himself Rachel. In 2016 he travelled to Bangkok and then to Malaysia, combining his own personal torments with his desire to track down and uncover child trafficking networks.

He returned to Bangkok that December, and paid £15,000 to a private surgeon to remove both his testicles. This clearly did not have the intended effect he hoped for, and despite being scheduled for a vaginoplasty in March 2017, he instead checked into the Nightingale clinic in London. There, he was finally diagnosed with severe post-traumatic distress, stemming from the death of his twins, his son and the police work he had been undertaking for nearly 20 years. Through intensive trauma counselling he began the process of detransitioning, taking male hormones and returning to his name - Richard. Writing in the Mail on Sunday:

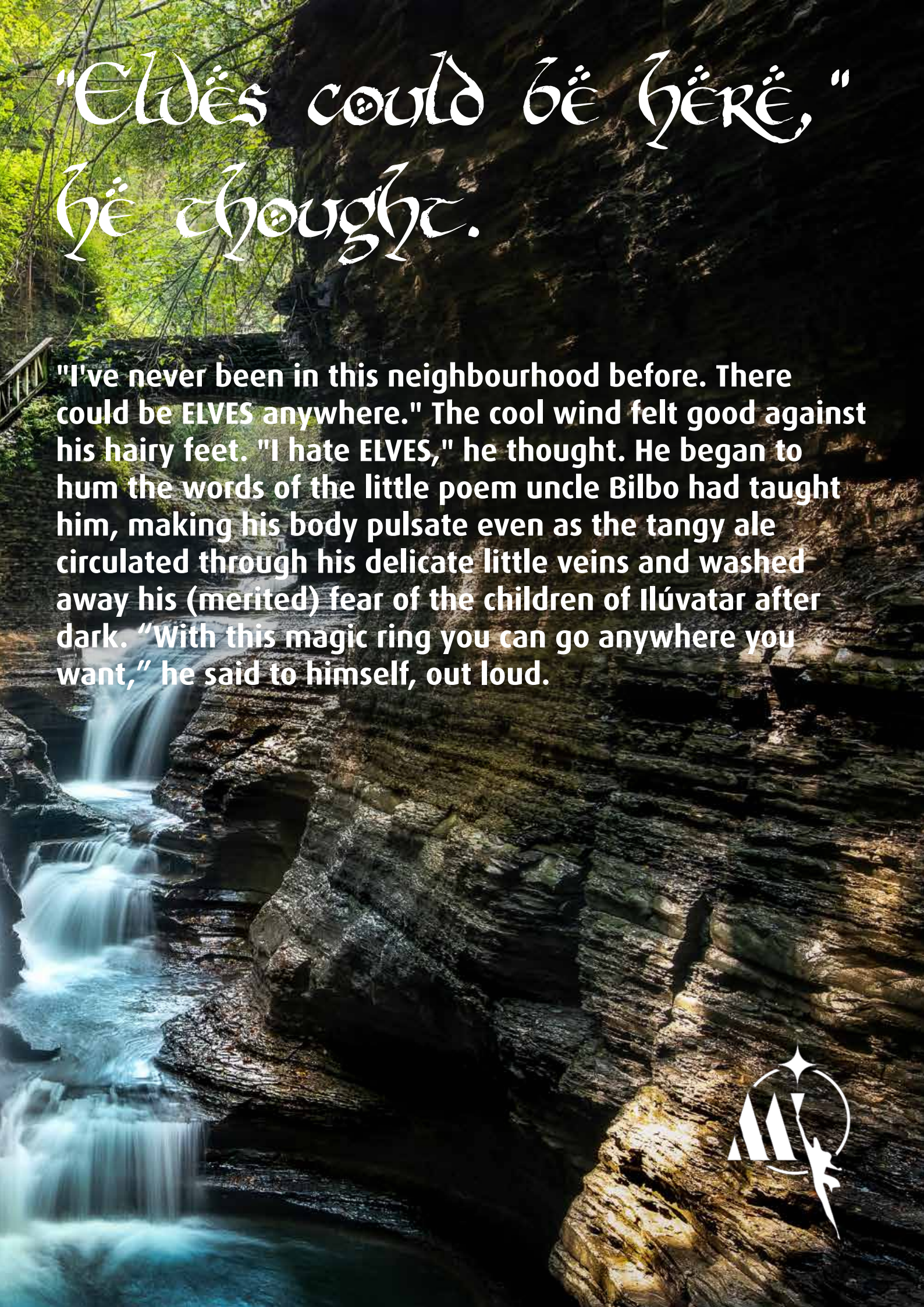
For a decade, I ran and ran. I tried to escape my life, my very identity. I changed my gender to leave Richard and his life behind. Inspired by youthful images of smiling women, I grabbed the chance for a different life. I know I'm unusual and that few others have experienced the multiple traumas to have befallen me"

While not bitter, he wrote that he was incorrectly diagnosed by the NHS gender services and was never questioned as to why he wanted to change his sex. This is both revealing of how the transgender medical industry operates and of how complex trauma can lead to body dysmorphia. Tragically he will have to live the rest of his life on hormone therapy, an avoidable mistake.

As if this tale was not baffling enough, while he was in the process of transitioning towards his short time as 'Rachel', Hoskins was asked to consult on the confusing case of Operation Conifer by the Wiltshire Police in 2015. Operation Conifer was a national investigation into accusations made against former Prime Minister Edward Heath that he abused young children. This included a string of different allegations, and the final report documents inquiries into sex workers, use of maritime vessels, bodyguards and intelligence officers amongst others. Hoskins was asked to work on a particularly lurid investigation based on the testimony of 'Lucy X', who gave a description of a satanic ritual during which Heath and other figures of authority abused a young boy on an altar, killed him and feasted on his body. The police were concerned that her testimony was rational, structured and 'evidence-based', and that it should be taken seriously. Hoskins ultimately dismissed the report, citing the controversial use of hypnosis and 'memory-retrieval' techniques by psychotherapists working with Lucy X. He chose to leak his findings to the press, believing that the police would ultimately bury or ignore his work. Whether or not one trusts Hoskins' judgement at this time in his life, it is telling that he was allowed to work on such high profile cases, given that he was obviously suffering from extreme mental distress. The total acceptance of transgender ideology within the senior ranks of the police services meant he was relied upon for his expertise at a time when he clearly needed help.

Hoskins continues to write for various publications, including the *Mail on Sunday*, and has clarified his position on transgenderism and the NHS, taking a moderately 'gender-critical' stance. It's hard not to see his life as ultimately tragic, a man broken by the Congo and haunted by the spiritual world of its inhabitants. Death, the suffering of children, witchcraft, ritual sacrifice - these themes have attached themselves to him ever since he refused to perform the rites to save his child. Despite this, he has struggled and persevered to help bring an end to the scourge of modern witchcraft accusations and deaths, particularly in Britain, and has relentlessly pointed out the failings of a world with open borders, where children can be trafficked and tortured with impunity. No doubt he will find himself on the front lines of this battle again as cases of witchcraft continue to grow in England. He has never shaken whatever attached itself to him all those years in the jungles of central Africa, but maybe this is how some curses work, a man must suffer to see what he is made of, and what he might do with his life.

Stone Age Herbalist tweets @ paracelsus1092. For links to all of his writing and podcast appearances, visit linktr.ee/stoneageherbalist. A collection of his essays, Berserkers, Cannibals and Shamans, *is available now via Amazon.*



"I've never been in this neighbourhood before. There could be ELVES anywhere." The cool wind felt good against his hairy feet. "I hate ELVES," he thought. He began to hum the words of the little poem uncle Bilbo had taught him, making his body pulsate even as the tangy ale circulated through his delicate little veins and washed away his (merited) fear of the children of Ilúvatar after dark. "With this magic ring you can go anywhere you want," he said to himself, out loud.

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BEOWULF

GREATEST OF THE GOTHS

Excerpts from J.R.R. Tolkein's Translation and Commentary

Illustrations by Michael Vinson

THEN FOR THE YOUNG GEATISH KNIGHTS TOGETHER IN COMPANY A BENCH WAS MADE FREE IN THE DRINKING HALL...

Unferth spake, son of Ecglaf, who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings, a spell to bring forth strife he loosed - the quest of Beowulf come thus boldly over the sea gave him great displeasure; for it was not to his liking that any other man in this world below should ever accomplish more honor under heaven than he himself.

'Art thou that Beowulf who strove with Breca in swimming upon the wide sea, that time when ye two in pride made trial of the waters and for a rash vaunt hazarded your lives upon the deep? No man, friend or foe, could dissuade you two from that venture frought with woe, when with limbs ye rowed the sea... Seven nights ye two laboured in the water's realm. He overmatched thee in swimming, he had greater strength!

BEOWULF SPAKE, SON OF ECGTHEOW:

'Lo! My friend Unferth, flushed with drink thou hast spent much speech, telling of Breca and his feat. Truth I account it that greater prowess in the sea had I, more labour in the waves than any other man. We two agreed, being boys, and made our vaunt, being both in the youth of life, that we would hazard our lives out upon the ocean; and that we accomplished even so. Naked we held our swords, hard in our hands, when we two rowed the sea; we sought thus to defend ourselves from monstrous fish. Never at all could he swim away from me afar upon the streaming waves, more swift than I upon the deep.

Many a time deadly assailants menaced me grievously. With my beloved sword I ministered to them.

HOWBEIT IT WAS MY LOT WITH SWORD TO SLAY NINE SEA-DEMONS'

THEN... HROTHGAR'S MINSTREL TOUCHED UPON A TALE TO THE LIKING OF THOSE UPON THE BENCHES DRINKING:

He told of the Sons of Fin..the Scyldings [who] fell by fate in the Frisian slaughter. Of a truth Hildeburg had little cause to praise the loyalty of the Jutes; by no fault of hers she was robbed of her loved ones in the clash of shields, of brothers and of sons. They fell according to their doom, slain by the spear.

A WOEFUL LADY SHE!

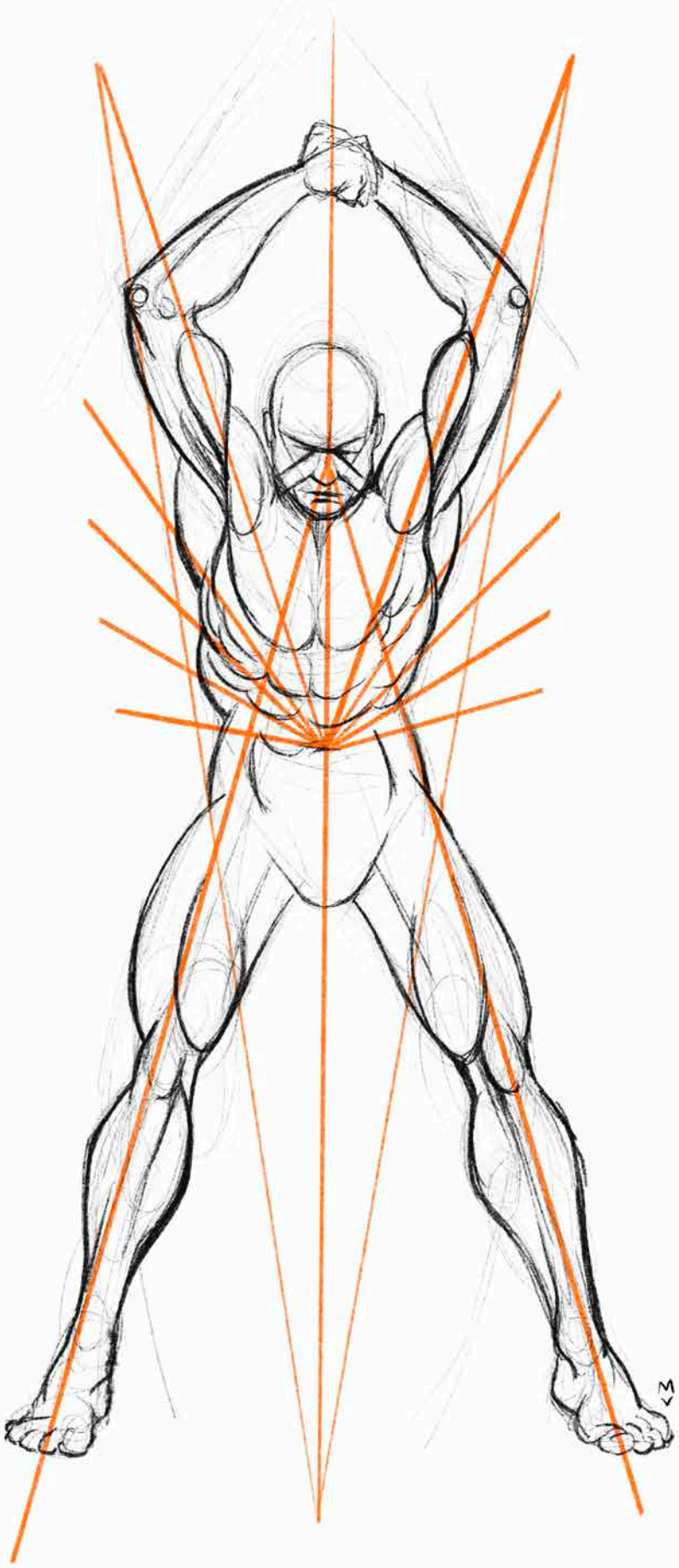
Thus on both sides they confirmed a binding treaty of peace. Hengest Finn in full and without reserve declared with solemn oaths that he would with the advice of his counsellors honourably entreat the sad remnant (of the fight); and that there should no man ever recall it to mind, now though they served the slayer of him who before had given them rings... if moreover any of the men of Frisia should with grievous words recall to memory that deadly feud, then should it be expiated by the edge of the sword.

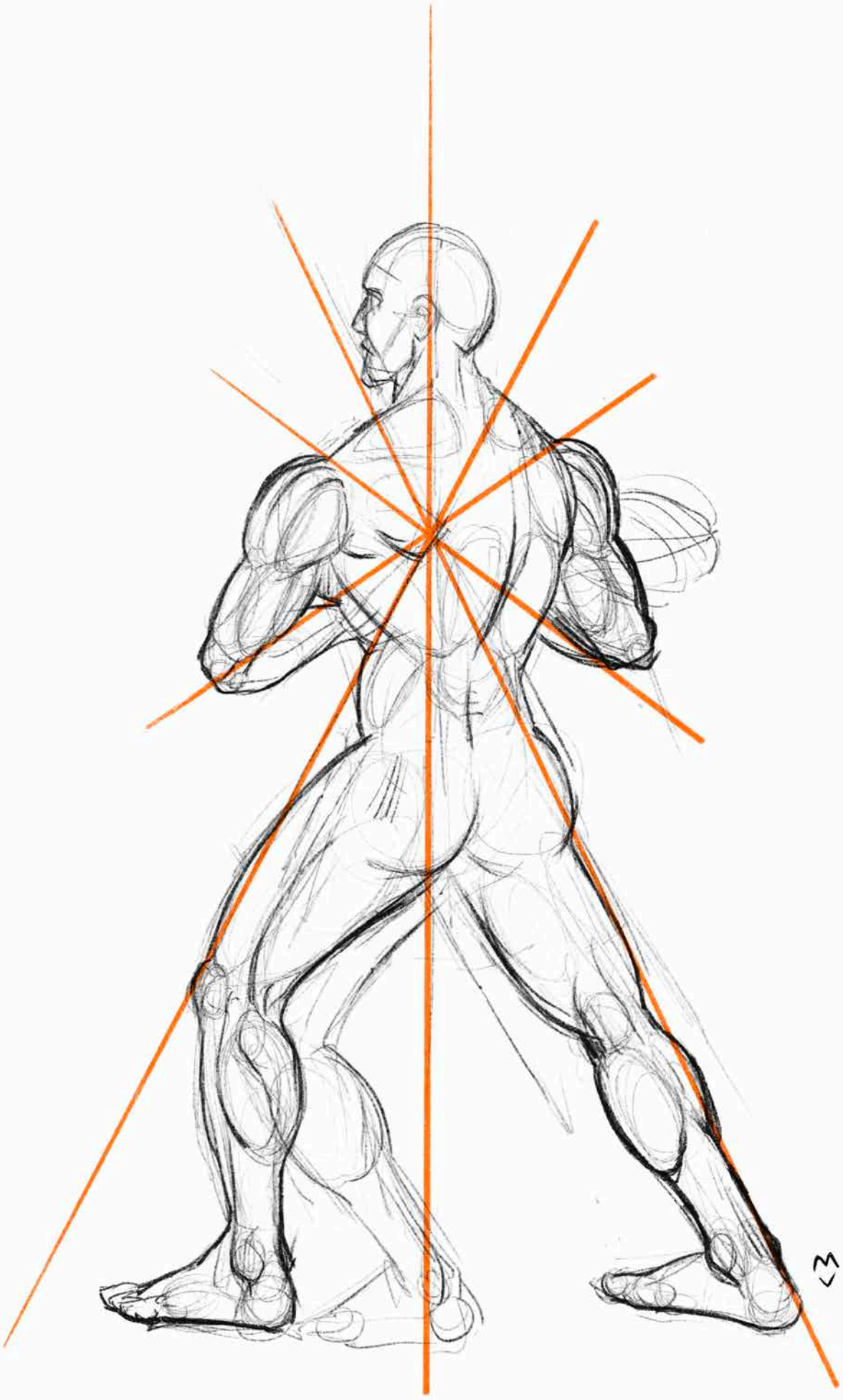
A pyre was made ready, and the gleaming gold brought forth from the treasury. The best of the heros in battle of the warrior Scyldings was arrayed upon the funeral pyre. Upon that pyre was plain to see blood-drenched corslet, swine crest all made of gold, boar hard as iron, many a lord by wounds destroyed - one and all they had all fallen in that slaughter!

Then Hildeburg bade that her own son be commited to the flames upon the pyre of Hnaef, there to burn their bones, setting him upon the funeral pyre at his uncle's side.

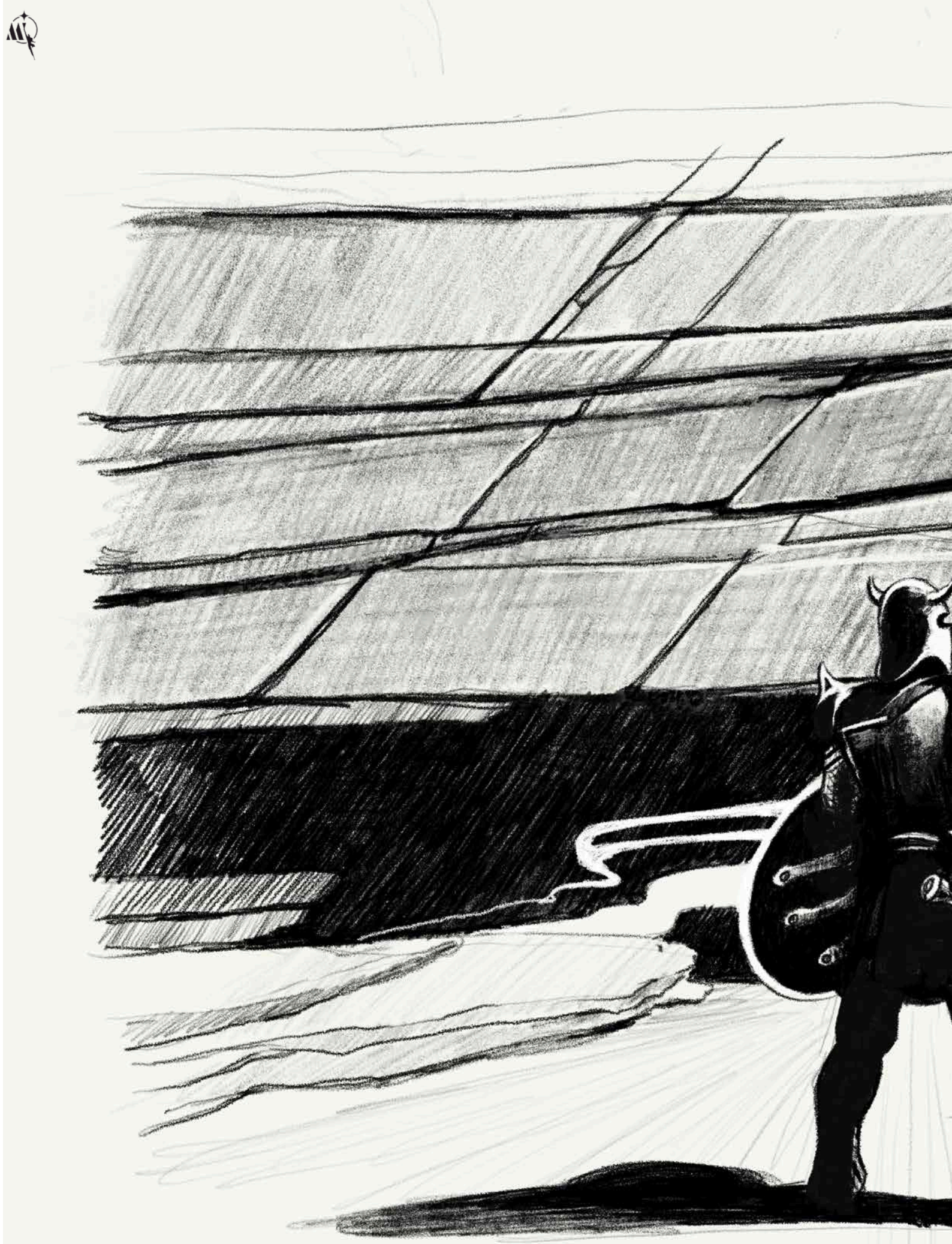
THE LADY MOURNED, BEWAILING THEM IN SONG.

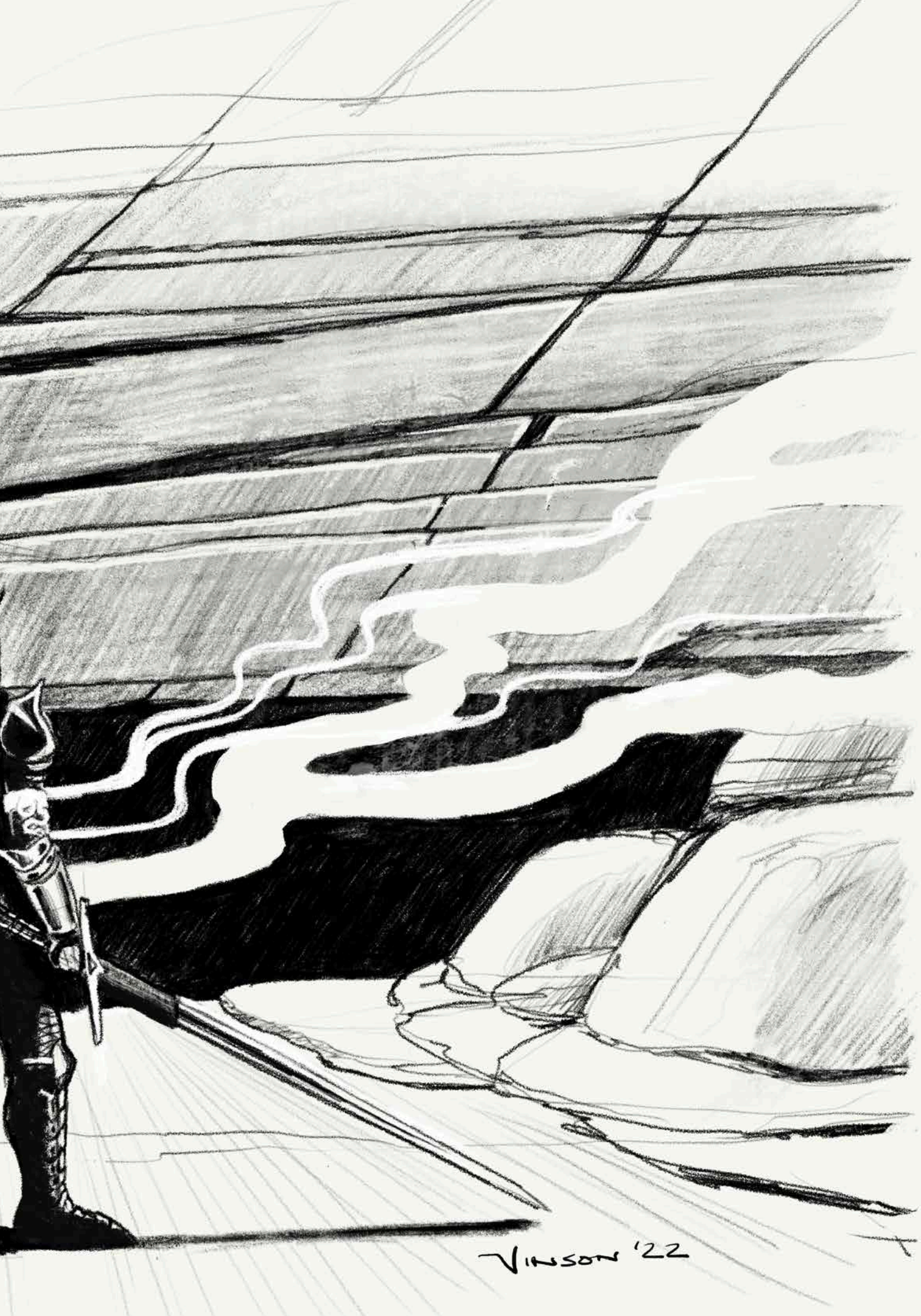
The warrior was mounted upon high. Up to the clouds swirled that mightiest of destroying fires, roaring before the burial ground. Consumed were their heads, their gaping wounds burst open, the cruel hurts of the body, and the blood sprang forth. Flame devoured them all, hungriest of spirits, all that in that place war had taken of either people, their glory passed away.





GRENDEL'S MOTHER: Straightaway that creature that with cruel lust, ravenous and grim, had a hundred seasons held the watery realm, perceived that there from on high some man was come to espy the dwelling of inhuman things. She clutched then at him, seized in her dire claws the warrior bold.

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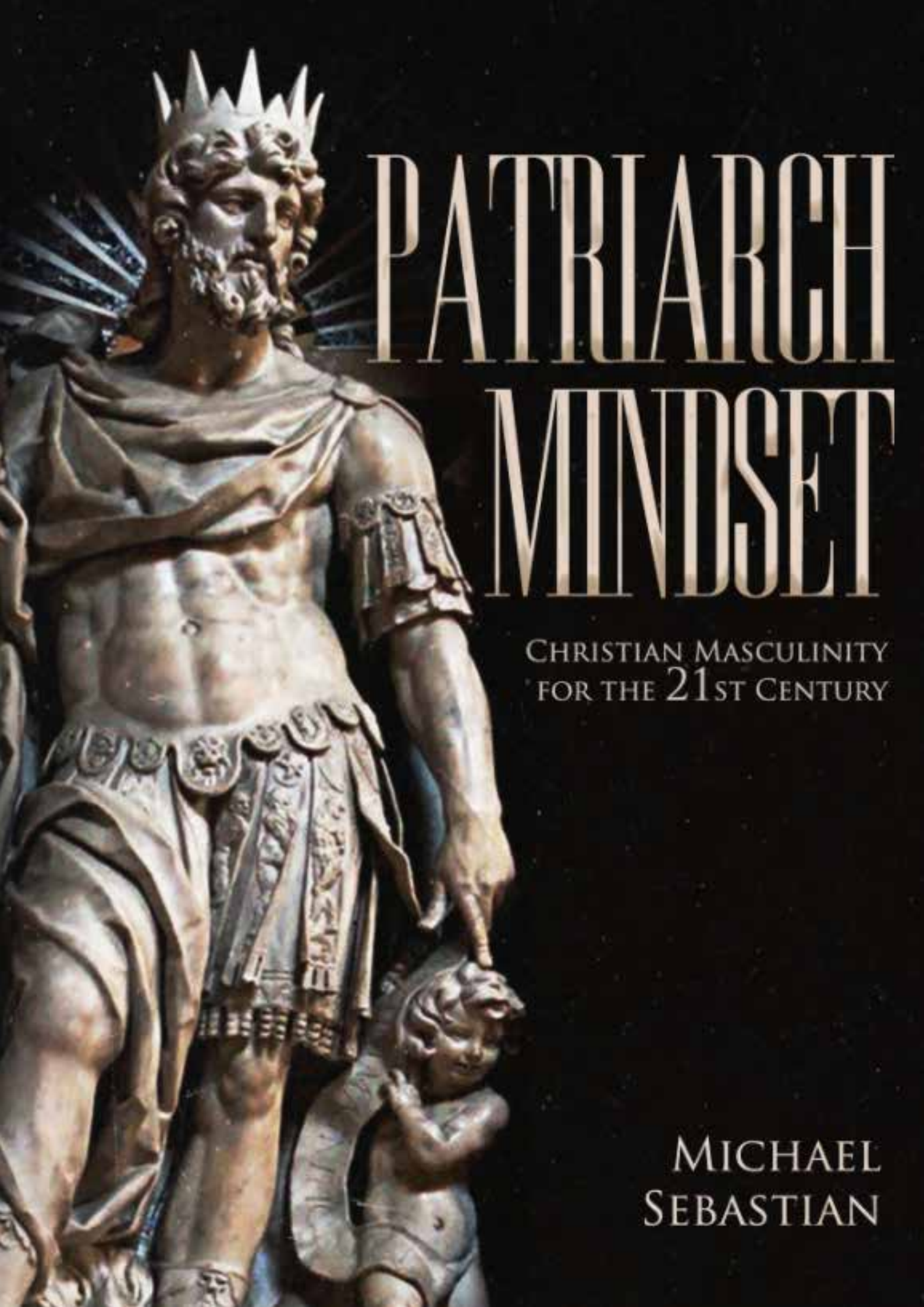

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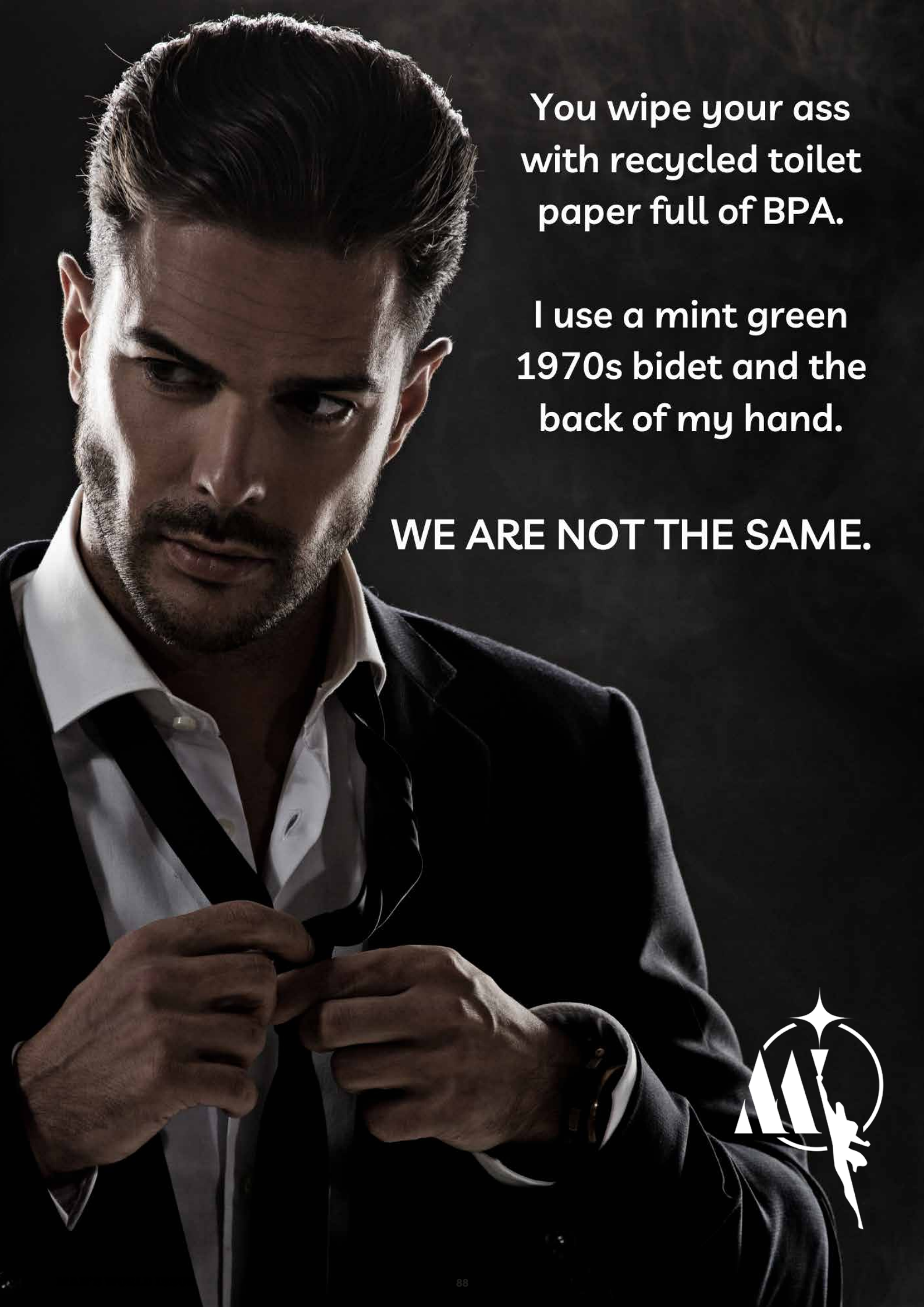
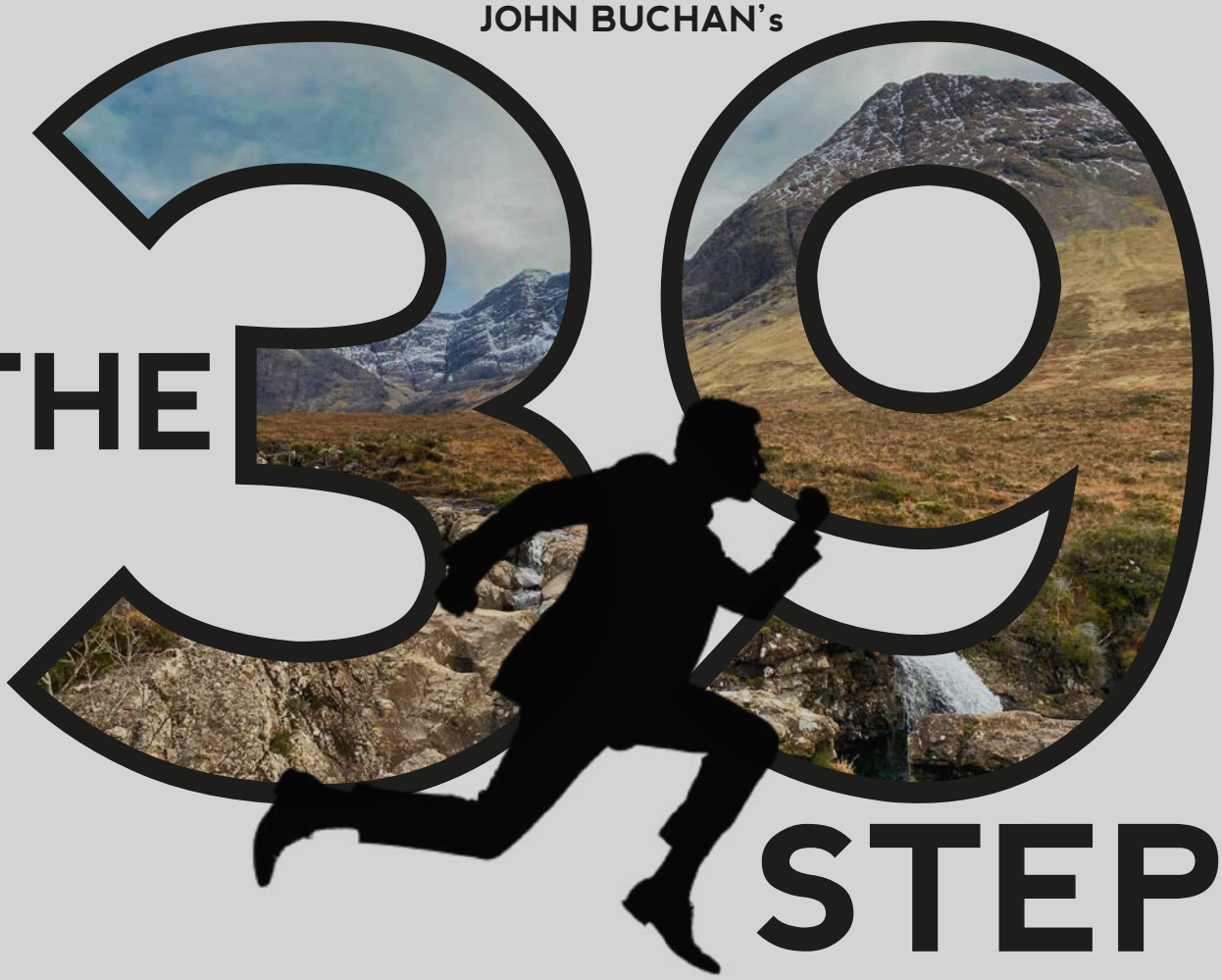

You wipe your ass with recycled toilet paper full of BPA.
I use a mint green 1970s bidet and the back of my hand.
WE ARE NOT THE SAME.

JOHN BUCHAN's

THE 39 STEPS



IN CHAPTER FIVE OF THE CLASSIC ADVENTURE NOVEL, OUR HERO RICHARD HANNAY FINDS HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH HIS PURSUERS...

I sat down on the very crest of the pass and took stock of my position.

Behind me was the road climbing through a long cleft in the hills, which was the upper glen of some notable river. In front was a flat space of maybe a mile, all pitted with bog-holes and rough with tussocks, and then beyond it the road fell steeply down another glen to a plain whose blue dimness melted into the distance. To left and right were round-shouldered green hills as smooth as pancakes, but to the south—that is, the left hand—there was a glimpse of high heathery mountains, which I remembered from the map as the big knot of hill which I had chosen for my sanctuary. I was on the central boss of a huge upland country, and could see everything moving for miles. In the meadows below the road half a mile back a cottage smoked, but it was the only sign of human life. Otherwise there was only the calling of plovers and the tinkling of little streams.

It was now about seven o'clock, and as I waited I heard once again that ominous beat in the air. Then I realized that my vantage-ground might be in reality a trap. There was no cover for a tomtit in those bald green places.

I sat quite still and hopeless while the beat grew louder. Then I saw an aeroplane coming up from the east. It was flying high, but as I looked it dropped several hundred feet and began to circle round the knot of hill in narrowing circles, just as a hawk wheels before it pounces. Now it was flying very low, and now the observer on board caught sight of me. I could see one of the two occupants examining me through glasses.

Suddenly it began to rise in swift whorls, and the next I knew it was speeding eastward again till it became a speck in the blue morning.

That made me do some savage thinking. My enemies had located me, and the next thing would be a cordon round me. I didn't know what force they could command, but I was certain it would be sufficient. The aeroplane had seen my bicycle, and would conclude that I would try to escape by the road. In that case there might be a chance on the moors to the right or left. I wheeled the machine a hundred yards from the highway, and plunged it into a moss-hole, where it sank among pond-weed and water-butter-

cups. Then I climbed to a knoll which gave me a view of the two valleys. Nothing was stirring on the long white ribbon that threaded them.

I have said there was not cover in the whole place to hide a rat. As the day advanced it was flooded with soft fresh light till it had the fragrant sunniness of the South African veld. At other times I would have liked the place, but now it seemed to suffocate me. The free moorlands were prison walls, and the keen hill air was the breath of a dungeon.

I tossed a coin—heads right, tails left—and it fell heads, so I turned to the north. In a little I came to the brow of the ridge which was the containing wall of the pass. I saw the highroad for maybe ten miles, and far down it something that was moving, and that I took to be a motor-car. Beyond the ridge I looked on a rolling green moor, which fell away into wooded glens.

Now my life on the veld has given me the eyes of a kite, and I can see things for which most men need a telescope…. Away down the slope, a couple of miles away, several men were advancing, like a row of beaters at a shoot.

I dropped out of sight behind the sky-line. That way was shut to me, and I must try the bigger hills to the south beyond the highway. The car I had noticed was getting nearer, but it was still a long way off with some very steep gradients before it. I ran hard, crouching low except in the hollows, and as I ran I kept scanning the brow of the hill before me. Was it imagination, or did I see figures—one, two, perhaps more—moving in a glen beyond the stream?

If you are hemmed in on all sides in a patch of land there is only one chance of escape. You must stay in the patch, and let your enemies search it and not find you. That was good sense, but how on earth was I to escape notice in that table-cloth of a place? I would have buried myself to the neck in mud or lain below water or climbed the tallest tree. But there was not a stick of wood, the bog-holes were little puddles, the stream was a slender trickle. There was nothing but short heather, and bare hill bent, and the white highway.

Then in a tiny bight of road, beside a heap of stones, I found the roadman.

He had just arrived, and was wearily flinging down his hammer. He looked at me with a fishy eye and yawned.

"Confoond the day I ever left the herdin'!" he said, as if to the world at large. "There I was my ain maister. Now I'm a slave to the Goavernment, tethered to the roadside, wi' sair een, and a back like a suckle."

He took up the hammer, struck a stone, dropped the implement with an oath, and put both hands to his

ears. "Mercy on me! My heid's burstin'!" he cried.

He was a wild figure, about my own size but much bent, with a week's beard on his chin, and a pair of big horn spectacles.

"I canna dae't," he cried again. "The Surveyor maun just report me. I'm for my bed."

I asked him what was the trouble, though indeed that was clear enough.

"The trouble is that I'm no sober. Last nicht my dochter Merran was waddit, and they danced till fower in the byre. Me and some ither chiels sat down to the drinkin', and here I am. Peety that I ever lookit on the wine when it was red!"

I agreed with him about bed.

"It's easy speakin'," he moaned. "But I got a post-card yestreen sayin' that the new Road Surveyor would be round the day. He'll come and he'll no find me, or else he'll find me fou, and either way I'm a done man. I'll awa' back to my bed and say I'm no weel, but I doot that'll no help me, for they ken my kind o' no-weel-ness."

Then I had an inspiration. "Does the new Surveyor know you?" I asked.

"No him. He's just been a week at the job. He rins about in a wee motor-cawr, and wad speir the inside oot o' a whelk."

"Where's your house?" I asked, and was directed by a wavering finger to the cottage by the stream.

"Well, back to your bed," I said, "and sleep in peace. I'll take on your job for a bit and see the Surveyor."

He stared at me blankly; then, as the notion dawned on his fuddled brain, his face broke into the vacant drunkard's smile.

"You're the billy," he cried. "It'll be easy eneuch managed. I've finished that bing o' stanes, so you needna chap ony mair this forenoon. Just take the barry, and wheel eneuch metal frae yon quarry doon the road to mak anither bing the morn. My name's Alexander Trummle, and I've been seeven year at the trade, and twenty afore that herdin' on Leithen Water. My freens ca' me Ecky, and whiles Specky, for I wear glesses, being waik i' the sicht. Just you speak the Surveyor fair, and ca' him Sir, and he'll be fell pleased. I'll be back or midday."

I borrowed his spectacles and filthy old hat; stripped off coat, waistcoat, and collar, and gave him them to carry home; borrowed, too, the foul stump of a clay pipe as an extra property. He indicated my simple tasks, and without more ado set off at an amble bedwards. Bed may have been his chief object, but I think there was also something left in the foot of a bottle. I prayed that he might be safe under cover before my friends arrived on the scene.

Then I set to work to dress for the part. I opened the collar of my shirt—it was a vulgar blue-and-white check such as ploughmen wear—and revealed a neck as brown as any tinker's. I rolled up my sleeves, and there was a forearm which might have been a blacksmith's, sunburnt and rough with old scars. I got my boots and trouser-legs all white from the dust of the road, and hitched up my trousers, tying them with string below the knee. Then I set to work on my face. With a handful of dust I made a water-mark round my neck, the place where Mr Turnbull's Sunday ablutions might be expected to stop. I rubbed a good deal of dirt also into the sunburn of my cheeks. A roadman's eyes would no doubt be a little inflamed, so I contrived to get some dust in both of mine, and by dint of vigorous rubbing produced a bleary effect.

The sandwiches Sir Harry had given me had gone off with my coat, but the roadman's lunch, tied up in a red handkerchief, was at my disposal. I ate with great relish several of the thick slabs of scone and cheese and drank a little of the cold tea. In the handkerchief was a local paper tied with string and addressed to Mr Turnbull—obviously meant to solace his midday leisure. I did up the bundle again, and put the paper conspicuously beside it.

My boots did not satisfy me, but by dint of kicking among the stones I reduced them to the granite-like surface which marks a roadman's footgear. Then I bit and scraped my finger-nails till the edges were all cracked and uneven. The men I was matched against would miss no detail. I broke one of the bootlaces and retied it in a clumsy knot, and loosed the other so that my thick grey socks bulged over the uppers. Still no sign of anything on the road. The motor I had observed half an hour ago must have gone home.

My toilet complete, I took up the barrow and began my journeys to and from the quarry a hundred yards off.

I remember an old scout in Rhodesia, who had done many queer things in his day, once telling me that the secret of playing a part was to think yourself into it. You could never keep it up, he said, unless you could manage to convince yourself that you were it. So I shut off all other thoughts and switched them on to the road-mending. I thought of the little white cottage as my home, I recalled the years I had spent herding on Leithen Water, I made my mind dwell lovingly on sleep in a box-bed and a bottle of cheap whisky. Still nothing appeared on that long white road.

Now and then a sheep wandered off the heather

to stare at me. A heron flopped down to a pool in the stream and started to fish, taking no more notice of me than if I had been a milestone. On I went, trundling my loads of stone, with the heavy step of the professional. Soon I grew warm, and the dust on my face changed into solid and abiding grit. I was already counting the hours till evening should put a limit to Mr Turnbull's monotonous toil.

Suddenly a crisp voice spoke from the road, and looking up I saw a little Ford two-seater, and a round-faced young man in a bowler hat.

"Are you Alexander Turnbull?" he asked. "I am the new County Road Surveyor. You live at Blackhopefoot, and have charge of the section from Laidlawbyres to the Riggs? Good! A fair bit of road, Turnbull, and not badly engineered. A little soft about a mile off, and the edges want cleaning. See you look after that. Good morning. You'll know me the next time you see me."

Clearly my get-up was good enough for the dreaded Surveyor. I went on with my work, and as the morning grew towards noon I was cheered by a little traffic. A baker's van breasted the hill, and sold me a bag of ginger biscuits which I stowed in my trouser-pockets against emergencies. Then a herd passed with sheep, and disturbed me somewhat by asking loudly, "What had become o' Specky?"

"In bed wi' the colic," I replied, and the herd passed on….

Just about midday a big car stole down the hill, glided past and drew up a hundred yards beyond. Its three occupants descended as if to stretch their legs, and sauntered towards me.

Two of the men I had seen before from the window of the Galloway inn—one lean, sharp, and dark, the other comfortable and smiling. The third had the look of a countryman—a vet, perhaps, or a small farmer. He was dressed in ill-cut knickerbockers, and the eye in his head was as bright and wary as a hen's.

"Morning," said the last. "That's a fine easy job o' yours."

I had not looked up on their approach, and now, when accosted, I slowly and painfully straightened my back, after the manner of roadmen; spat vigorously, after the manner of the low Scot; and regarded them steadily before replying. I confronted three pairs of eyes that missed nothing.

"There's waur jobs and there's better," I said sententiously. "I wad rather hae yours, sittin' a' day on your hinderlands on thae cushions. It's you and your muckle cawrs that wreck my roads! If we a' had oor richts, ye sud be made to mend what ye break."

The bright-eyed man was looking at the newspaper lying beside Turnbull's bundle.

"I see you get your papers in good time," he said.

I glanced at it casually. "Aye, in gude time. Seein' that that paper cam' out last Setterday I'm just sax days late."

He picked it up, glanced at the superscription, and laid it down again. One of the others had been looking at my boots, and a word in German called the speaker's attention to them.

"You've a fine taste in boots," he said. "These were never made by a country shoemaker."

"They were not," I said readily. "They were made in London. I got them frae the gentleman that was here last year for the shootin'. What was his name now?" And I scratched a forgetful head. Again the sleek one spoke in German. "Let us get on," he said. "This fellow is all right."

They asked one last question.

"Did you see anyone pass early this morning? He might be on a bicycle or he might be on foot."

I very nearly fell into the trap and told a story of a bicyclist hurrying past in the grey dawn. But I had the sense to see my danger. I pretended to consider very deeply.

"I wasna up very early," I said. "Ye see, my dochter was merrit last nicht, and we keepit it up late. I opened the house door about seeven and there was naebody on the road then. Since I cam up here there has just been the baker and the Ruchill herd, besides you gentlemen."

One of them gave me a cigar, which I smelt gingerly and stuck in Turnbull's bundle. They got into their car and were out of sight in three minutes.

My heart leaped with an enormous relief, but I went on wheeling my stones. It was as well, for ten minutes later the car returned, one of the occupants waving a hand to me. Those gentry left nothing to chance.

I finished Turnbull's bread and cheese, and pretty soon I had finished the stones. The next step was what puzzled me. I could not keep up this roadmaking business for long. A merciful Providence had kept Mr Turnbull indoors, but if he appeared on the scene there would be trouble. I had a notion that the cordon was still tight round the glen, and that if I walked in any direction I should meet with questioners. But get out I must. No man's nerve could stand more than a day of being spied on.

I stayed at my post till five o'clock. By that time I had resolved to go down to Turnbull's cottage at nightfall and take my chance of getting over the hills in the darkness. But suddenly a new car came up the road, and slowed down a yard or two from me.

YOU WILL
EAT THE EGGS

Food oils stored in plastic contain up to 400x the levels of endocrine disruptors in bottled water*

* "Global review of phthalates in edible oil: An emerging and nonnegligible exposure source to humans", The Science of the Total Environment (2020)

A fresh wind had risen, and the occupant wanted to light a cigarette.

It was a touring car, with the tonneau full of an assortment of baggage. One man sat in it, and by an amazing chance I knew him. His name was Marmaduke Jopley, and he was an offence to creation. He was a sort of blood stockbroker, who did his business by toadying eldest sons and rich young peers and foolish old ladies. "Marmie' was a familiar figure, I understood, at balls and polo-weeks and country houses. He was an adroit scandal-monger, and would crawl a mile on his belly to anything that had a title or a million. I had a business introduction to his firm when I came to London, and he was good enough to ask me to dinner at his club. There he showed off at a great rate, and pattered about his duchesses till the snobbery of the creature turned me sick. I asked a man afterwards why nobody kicked him, and was told that Englishmen reverenced the weaker sex.

Anyhow there he was now, nattily dressed, in a fine new car, obviously on his way to visit some of his smart friends. A sudden daftness took me, and in a second I had jumped into the tonneau and had him by the shoulder.

"Hullo, Jopley," I sang out. "Well met, my lad!" He got a horrid fright. His chin dropped as he stared at me. "Who the devil are you?" he gasped.

"My name's Hannay," I said. "From Rhodesia, you remember."

"Good God, the murderer!" he choked.

"Just so. And there'll be a second murder, my dear, if you don't do as I tell you. Give me that coat of yours. That cap, too."

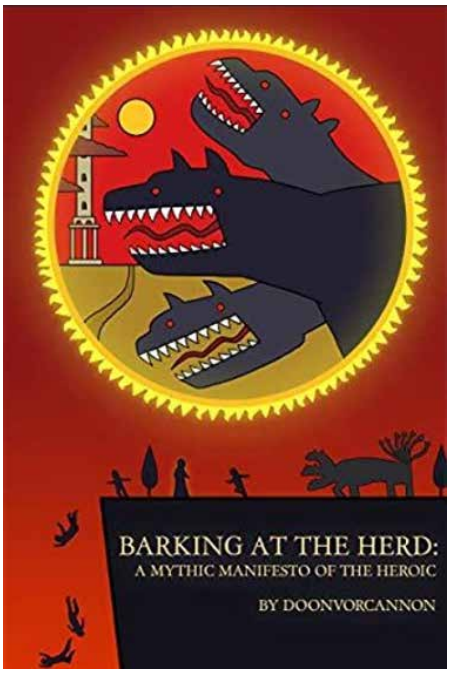
He did as he was bid, for he was blind with terror. Over my dirty trousers and vulgar shirt I put on his smart driving-coat, which buttoned high at the top and thereby hid the deficiencies of my collar. I stuck the cap on my head, and added his gloves to my get-up. The dusty roadman in a minute was transformed into one of the neatest motorists in Scotland. On Mr Jopley's head I clapped Turnbull's unspeakable hat, and told him to keep it there.

Then with some difficulty I turned the car. My plan was to go back the road he had come, for the watchers, having seen it before, would probably let it pass unremarked, and Marmie's figure was in no way like mine.

"Now, my child," I said, "sit quite still and be a good boy. I mean you no harm. I'm only borrowing your car for an hour or two. But if you play me any tricks, and above all if you open your mouth, as sure as there's a God above me I'll wring your neck. Savez?"

I enjoyed that evening's ride. We ran eight miles down the valley, through a village or two, and I could not help noticing several strange-looking folk lounging by the roadside. These were the watchers who would have had much to say to me if I had come in other garb or company. As it was, they looked incuriously on. One touched his cap in salute, and I responded graciously.

As the dark fell I turned up a side glen which, as I remember from the map, led into an unfrequented corner of the hills. Soon the villages were left behind, then the farms, and then even the wayside cottage. Presently we came to a lonely moor where the night was blackening the sunset gleam in the bog pools. Here we stopped, and I obligingly reversed the car and restored to Mr Jopley his belongings.



"A thousand thanks," I said. "There's more use in you than I thought. Now be off and find the police."

As I sat on the hillside, watching the tail-light dwindle, I reflected on the various kinds of crime I had now sampled. Contrary to general belief, I was not a murderer, but I had become an unholy liar, a shameless impostor, and a highwayman with a marked taste for expensive motor-cars.

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AS WE WERE,
SO SHALL WE
BE AGAIN.

"Sailor and His Girl"
Boris Kustodiev, 1920

Watercolour
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REAL
meat
Just meat. No grift.

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AS BAD AS THEY COME

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. 1953.

Dutch Van Zandt read the ransom note.

$50,000 or the dame gets it was the gist. The dame was Dorothy Malone, a B-movie beauty with a classy rep and no studio attachments. She was a worker, not a star. Not the kind of woman you try to ransom if you know what you're doing. But star or not, she was hip deep in some Western at R.K.O. and the suits were apoplectic.

The kidnappers identified themselves as the *Band of the Left Hand*. Sounded like limp-dick commies with the blacklist blues. Contact had been made and forty-eight hours given to come up with the dough and wait for further instructions.

Amateur hour. Not that it bothered Dutch. Kidnap jobs were always a gas, and a kidnapped actress meant all bets were off.

Security Consultant. It was a fancy term for a fixer and a goon, but it suited Dutch just fine. He made a slick living bird-dogging and bull-dogging for studio brass. Fast cash from fat cats.

It was a job for a bad man, and Dutch was as bad as they come.

Life was grand.

He was parked on the street in his Roadmaster with the top down. Dorothy Malone had a nice little one-story in Brentwood. Flowers in a little garden out front. No car in the driveway. He put the note in the glove box and let himself in through the back.

The door opened into the kitchen. It was tidy with a coffee cup and saucer in the sink. The chairs were pushed in neatly under the little table and the framed photos of ma and pa back in Texas were perfectly situated.

He saw the bowls on the floor just as he heard the deep growl behind him. He turned and saw a big, beautiful, but none-too-pleased German Shepherd showing teeth.

Dutch played it low and cool. At six-foot-six and two-forty he could break the dog's neck if he needed to but he hoped that he didn't. The big, bad man was a soft touch when it came to animals. A holdover from his Montana boyhood. Not even the War could take that from him.

"Easy, big fella," he said in a soft voice, slowly crouching down. The dog took a step back and gave a nasty bark. He flicked his fangs with his tongue the way dogs do when they're two seconds from tearing out your throat.

"Don't look at me like that." Dutch slowly reached

over to the ice box and pulled it open. Sure enough he found a fat prime rib waiting there like it was meant to be.

Thank God for Texas gals.

"I bet you're hungry, aren't you." He pulled out the steak and watched the dog's fury wither into wet-eyed longing. He held out the meat.

"Come on, buddy, I won't hurt you."

The dog came forward but stopped short, unsure. He gave another bark that was undercut with a whine. His paws padded nervously back and forth.

"Come on."

Finally the dog relented. Dutch's massive hands moved across his fur with a tenderness that didn't suit them. The dog wolfed down the steak and lapped at Dutch's face to show his gratitude and remorse.

"No hard feelings," Dutch rubbed behind the dog's ears. "Where's your mama, huh? Where did she go?"

He filled the water bowl and opened the back door. While the dog drank his fill and ran around the yard Dutch walked the rest of the house. It was more of the same. Modest but meticulous decorations and lived-in cleanliness. Photos of family and friends in place of expensive art. A crucifix on the wall in the living room.

He recalled the bookstore scene in *The Big Sleep*. Bogie comes in out of the rain and there's our girl. Brunette, bespectacled, and sharp as a fresh razor. She drops the glasses. Lets the hair down. And closes up shop to drink private-eye rye and wait out the rain with the Man, himself.

Dutch torched for her even then. He always did have a soft spot for dark-haired Irish girls.

He did a sweep of the medicine cabinet and the bedroom but found nothing out of the ordinary.

No signs of a struggle. Whoever took Dorothy Malone didn't do it here.

The cozy house yielded no clues but it gave Dutch a feeling for who the missing woman was. Head a little in the clouds but feet firmly on the ground. A little whimsy and a lot of heart.

The dog found him again in the living room and licked his hand. Dutch topped off his food and water before he left.

He parked in front of the Del Monte and had to crouch to get through the door. His massive frame spooked a woman coming out. He gave her his best grin and held the door. The

woman was all batting eyelashes and passed by so close it almost got biblical.

His grin took a sinister edge as he set eyes on Fred Shine at the far end of the bar. Shine was a muckraker for the *Herald* and knew more of L.A.'s dirty secrets than the Devil himself. Shine smiled. He looked like a possum in a bow tie.

"Hiya, Van Zandt," the possum said. "Buy me a drink?"

"Bum me a smoke?"

"Of course. What are friends for?"

"Who's a friend?"

Shine went theatrical, with a hand over his heart.

"You wound me, big guy."

"Don't worry. Something tells me you'll make it."

"Damn straight. I'll never die."

"What are you drinking?"

"Sazerac."

"Coonass."

"Thug."

It went on like that for a while. The low-blow back and forth of pals-by-necessity. Loathsome to the common man, the wolf and the rodent share a small kinship. Thus was the lot for men who made their living in the wake and filth of the rich and powerful.

But what a living.

"Give me the goods on the *Band of the Left Hand,*" Dutch said after a hearty swig of beer. Shine took clipped drags off a Chesterfield and blew the smoke through his nostrils.

"I got nothing concrete. I just hear rumors."

"I like rumors," Dutch said.

"Well I hear the Band is bad news, baby. Steer clear."

Dutch raised an eyebrow.

"I ain't scared of Hollywood reds, Fred."

"Oh they're red, all right," Shine said. "But not the way you mean." Shine took a drink for dramatic effect, the bent little prick. "They're devil worshipers." Shine wiggled his eyebrows.

"No shit?" Dutch said.

"And the little birds tell me they've killed people. Actual human sacrifice."

"Jesus."

"Amen."

"Where do I find them?"

"Beats the hell out of me," Shine said with a shrug. Dutch had to admit, the thought of beating the hell out of Fred Shine had no small share of appeal. But the little man's utility, and the wicked glee he derived from it amused Dutch too much.

He just stared at Shine, waiting him out. It took less than a minute.

"But I heard a rumor."

"Take your time," Dutch said. And the son of a bitch did. He took a sip of his sazerac and a lingering drag of the Chesterfield. Dutch was still as a statue. He didn't tap his feet. He didn't fidget. He didn't even blink. It was an affect that unnerved people and Shine was no exception.

"There's a fella by the name of Herb Becher. He runs the Vanguard Playhouse on Franklin. Ever been?"

"Can't say that I have."

"You leg-breakers are all the same. You got no culture."

"Culture. That's another word for fungus, ain't it?"

"You're a riot," Shine said. "Anyway, I hear whispers that Becher is a major player in subversive circles."

"Guys like that are a dime a dozen, Fred." Dutch countered.

"Becher got popped last year for fooling around with underage girls. When they raided his place they found all kinds of weirdo junk."

"Weird how?"

"Weird like witchcraft, sex magick – real occult shit."

"Guy sounds like a pervert."

"Pervert, pinko, probably half a swish. But he lawyered up good and beat the kiddie rap. If I were you I'd start with Becher."

Dutch finished his drink, slipped Shine a c-note and walked back out into the light.

Franklin Boulevard was paradise for stakeouts. It was all little shops and restaurants, teeming with pretty pedestrians and loquacious loafers. Dutch lounged like a jungle cat in the Roadmaster.

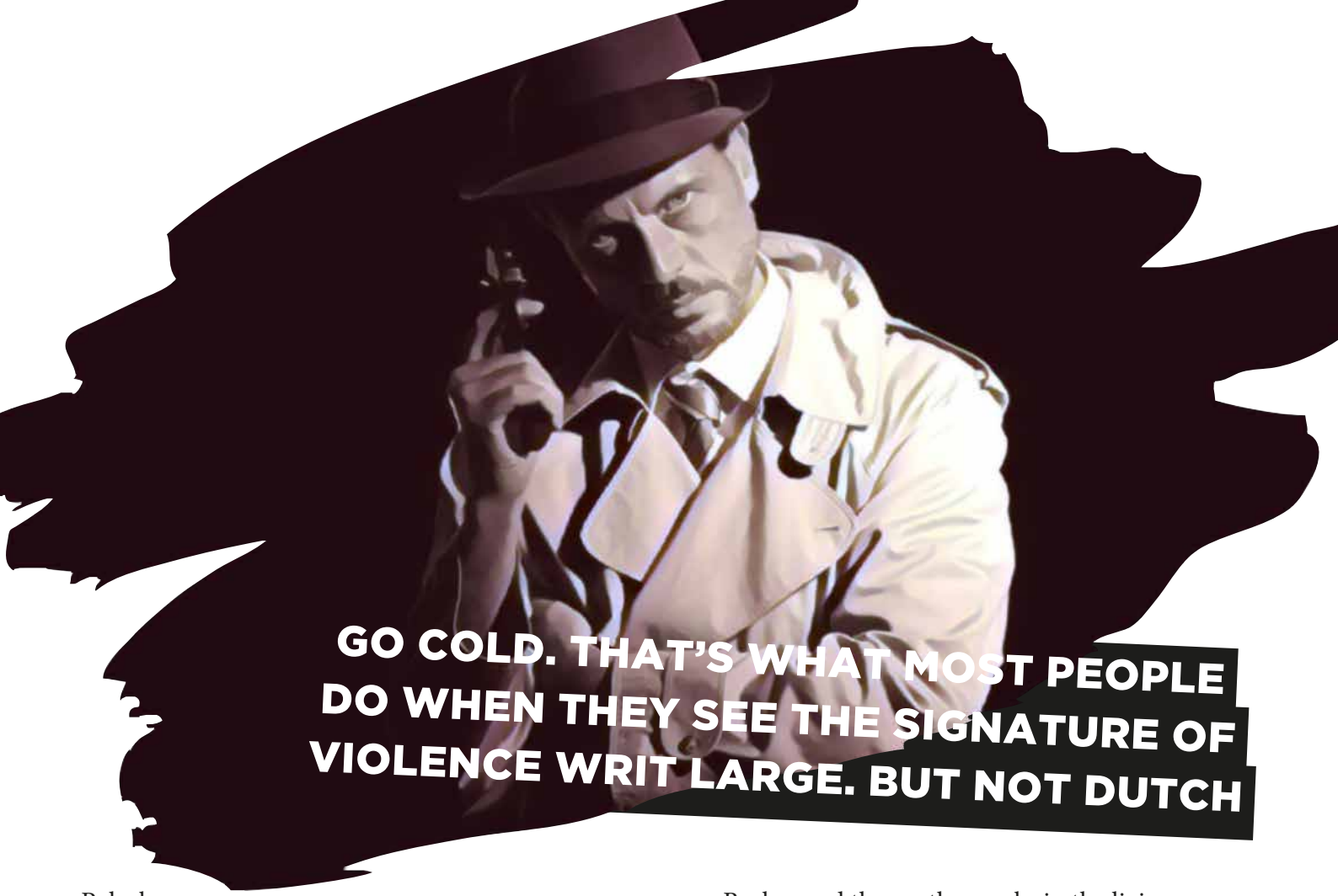
Sleeves up.

Top down.

His big left arm bent at the elbow, propped on the car door and holding a white paper cup of hot coffee. His big right arm stretched out across the seat with a cigarette between his fingers. He was parked across the street and half a block down from the Vanguard Theater. On the seat next to him was an 8x10 of Herb Becher.

Beach bum tan with an ascot and a smile like a pauper's graveyard. Not exactly Alan Ladd.

Dutch's cool gaze went from the photo to the canary yellow Bel Air parked in front of the theater. The car was registered to Becher but Dutch could have sussed that out with a glance. The marquee said they were putting on some show called *Woyzech* in a couple weeks. He couldn't tell if that was Kraut or



GO COLD. THAT'S WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO WHEN THEY SEE THE SIGNATURE OF VIOLENCE WRIT LARGE. BUT NOT DUTCH

Polack.

The coffee cup got lighter and the cigarette got shorter. No one came in or out of the theater. The bright blue sky turned tangerine. It was like that sometimes. Hurry up and wait.

Dutch bought some hotdogs from a fat man with a cart. Sure enough, when he was halfway through his third dog Herb Becker sashayed out of the theater in a silk shirt and too-high slacks. He had a sloppy little gang of ugly hangers on nipping at his heels. They all piled into Becher's Bel Air.

Dutch legged it back over to his ride and fired up the engine as Becher was pulling into traffic. He wolfed down the dog and hit the gas.

Becher hooked the Bel Air around and headed east. Dutch followed him nonchalant all the way to Los Feliz. Spit-shined sidewalks and immaculate lawns gave way to starter homes with chipped paint and weeds drooping like stumble-bums over the sidewalk. The Bel Air slowed and pulled into a driveway. The house was the same canary yellow, if faded. Dutch cruised on by, turned up the nearest cross street, and parked under the looming canopy of a magnolia tree. It was nearing full dark and the buds were closing up shop for the night.

He walked back to Becher's place and peeked in the windows. The curtains were drawn but they were thin and sheer. His nighttime eyes saw plenty.

Becher and those other geeks in the living room. One of them was slinging Satanic sermons with socialist overtones while another one set up a film projector. Becher left the room. Dutch walked around the side of the house, peeping windows.

Office. A mess of books packed into shelves that had never been dusted.

Bathroom. Toilet seat up and grunge on the shower curtain.

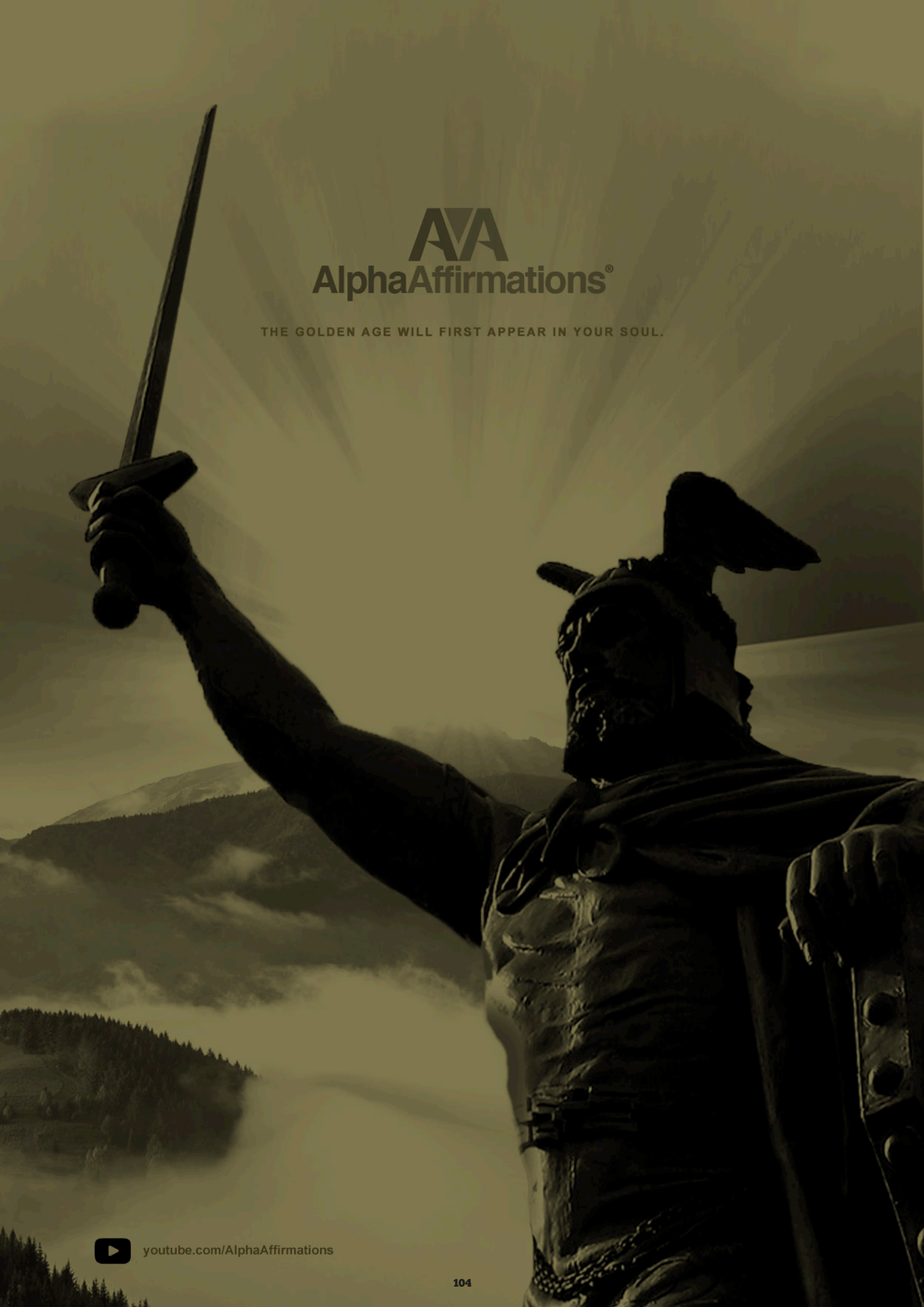
Bedroom. A naked woman tied to a dirty bed. A mattress soaked with blood.

Go cold. That's what most people do when they see the signature of violence writ large. But not Dutch. He felt a warm little fire spark in his chest and course through his veins like liquid heat. A thrill and a comfort all at once – like that feeling he got as a kid from the smell of pine sap and cinnamon on Christmas morning – that's the feeling that came over Dutch. The powerful muscles in his broad shoulders relaxed. Only his monstrous fists were clenched.

He walked around to the back of the house and found Becher standing over a brick fire pit. He threw in a mess of bloody sheets, sprayed them with lighter fluid, and lit them up.

Dutch stalked out into the night. As he drew closer to the fire and to his prey all thoughts of yesterday and tomorrow dissipated like cigarette smoke.

He was thoroughly entrenched in the electric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NOW.

Breath to breath.

Heartbeat to heartbeat.

The palm of his right hand covered Becher's mouth and nose with a perfect seal. The little man's stifled cry tickled his hand and gave him a brief memory of catching fireflies. Dutch grabbed Becher's arm with his left hand.

"Don't struggle," he cooed in Becher's ear. "You're mine. You struggle or scream and I'll break you in half. Do you understand?"

Becher nodded as best he could. Dutch held him like a vice.

"I'm gonna ask you some questions, Herb. And I want you to answer just as calm and quietly as I ask them. If you fuck with me or I think you're lying I'll hold your face in that fire until your eyes melt."

Becher whimpered.

"Don't cry," Dutch warned. "It makes me mad." He looked into the fire and saw the sheets cooking.

"Is that Dorothy Malone's blood?" He relaxed his palm just a tad. Becher shook his head.

"No," he whispered.

"Whose blood is it?"

"No one's."

Dutch pulled Becher's arm up behind his back and heard the man's shoulder dislocate. He screamed into Dutch's palm.

"You've got a lot of joints, Herb, and I've got all night. Think before you speak. Whose blood is it?" He lifted his palm. It was wet with tears and snot.

"Just a girl," Becher whispered frantically. "I don't...I think her name was Joanne or Josie, something like that."

"She the girl tied to bed back there?"

"Yes." He was blubbering now.

"I know you're with the *Band of the Left Hand*, Herb. I know you've got Dorothy Malone stashed somewhere. She alive?"

"Yes!" he moaned.

"Where is she?"

"1206 Kings Way! Just south of Laurel Canyon."

"Who else is there?"

"Lots of us. And the Magus."

"The Magus?"

"He's in charge."

These people, Dutch thought. "So this was all his bright idea?"

"NO!" Becher whisper-whimpered. "The dead girl. She and some of the others acted on their own. They named the *Band*. The Magus made examples of them."

"And he threw you a bone, huh?" Dutch felt Becher try to straighten up and grasp for some last minute dignity.

"The Magus rewards the faithful," Becher said. "He is powerful. He'll make you beg for mer-"

Dutch broke Becher's neck. It always surprised him how easy it was. He pushed the dead man over into the fire pit.

He pulled his .38. It looked like a toy in his massive mitt but it would do the job.

He went in through the back door and followed the sound of the sermon. He stepped into the living room and caught the scene quick. The preacher was four-eyed and bow-tied but otherwise passed for normal. His congregation was another matter. A fella built like a scarecrow with a haircut straight out of the Middle Ages sat on a ratty sofa next to a bookish broad with a uni-brow. A third dunce sat on the floor looking up at the talker like a fat Harpo Marx.

The projector was running a porno in tandem with the sermon. A free-for-all of flesh. Guys and girls writhing in a sea of skin, prostrating and supplicating to a tall man who wore the head of a black goat like a mask.

The Magus.

The malignant moviegoers looked at Dutch all glassy-eyed and confused. There was a moment of silence like you get just before lightning strikes. Dutch popped the three ghouls with the .38. Two head-shots that were almost a hat-trick but the fat boy tried to get up and the bullet caught him in the throat. He made this wheezing sound while he drowned on the dirty rug.

The preacher eyeballed Dutch. He was somewhere in that soupy void between shock and terror.

"You really worship the Devil?" Dutch asked.

"Yes," the preacher blubbered.

For some reason Dutch thought that was the funniest damn thing. But the joke went sour when he saw the girls in the skin flick making meat of themselves for the ravenous ram.

That sick bastard had Dorothy Malone.

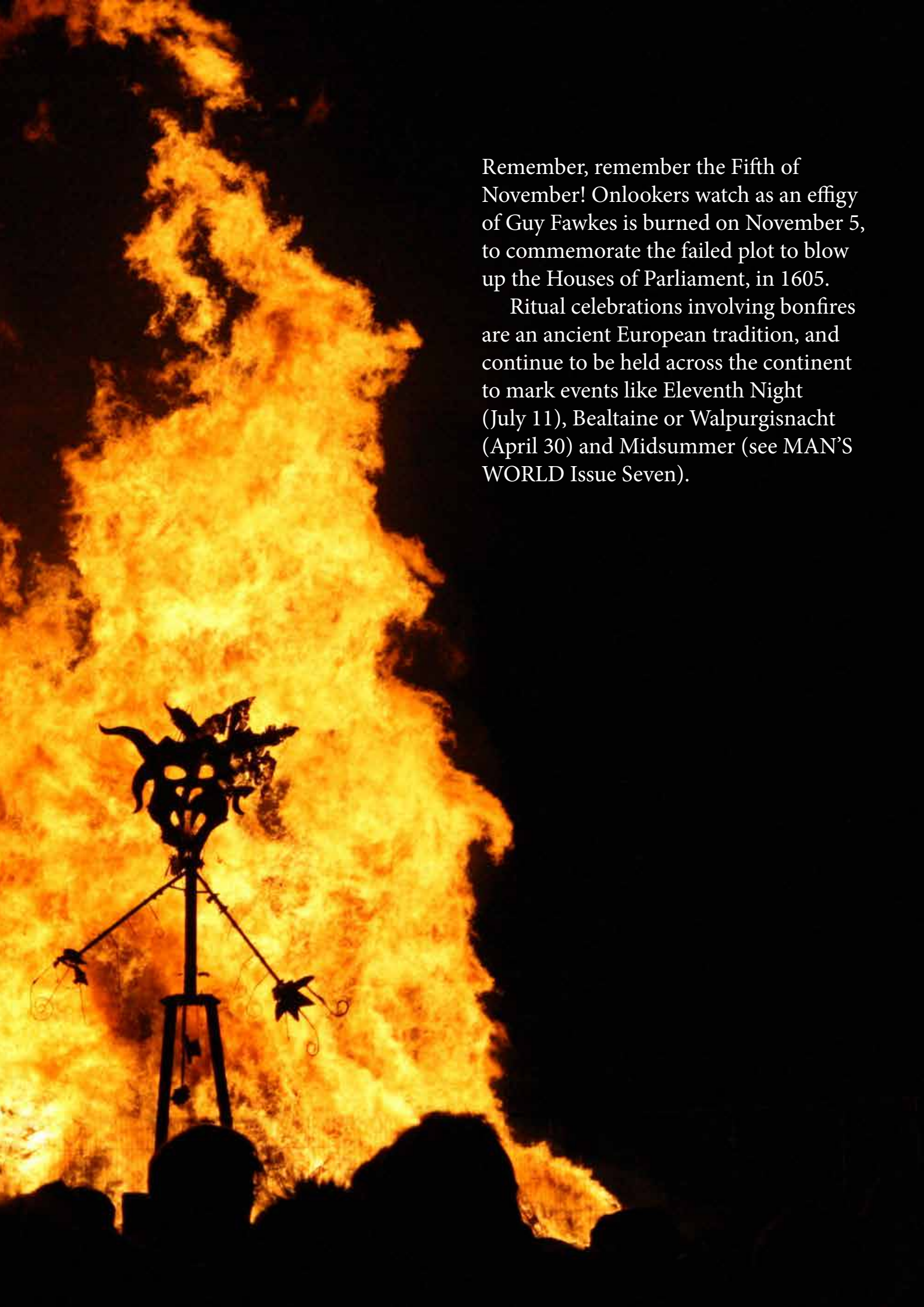
Dutch shot the little red preacher twice in the face. On his way out the door he took out his lighter and lit the curtains on fire.

The front room was fully ablaze when he drove past in the Roadmaster. He could already hear sirens in the distance. With the top down and the wind up he caught a whiff of Becher cooking in the fire pit and the smell made him miss the War.

The story continues on page 226.

MW EXPLORE!

Bonfire Night, UK



Remember, remember the Fifth of November! Onlookers watch as an effigy of Guy Fawkes is burned on November 5, to commemorate the failed plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament, in 1605.

Ritual celebrations involving bonfires are an ancient European tradition, and continue to be held across the continent to mark events like Eleventh Night (July 11), Bealtaine or Walpurgisnacht (April 30) and Midsummer (see MAN'S WORLD Issue Seven).

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TILTING AT BLACKPILLS

In this polemical essay, RAW EGG NATIONALIST asks what it really means to be a "blackpilled" writer. Are "dissident right" writers too gloomy for their own good? And, more importantly, what is a "dissident right" writer in the first place?

In Michel Houllebecq's novel *Platform*, Michel Renault, a bored civil servant who has just come into a substantial inheritance from his father, meets an enigmatic woman, Valérie, while visiting Thailand as a sex tourist. Back in France, they begin an affair which escalates into ever more dangerous and exhibitionist forms of sex – S&M, swinging, and public encounters. Michel quits his job, and tries to help Valérie and her boss rescue their failing travel business through a series of sex-tourism packages marketed at wealthy Western tourists. Eventually, the three travel to Thailand on one of these new packages. As they laze on sun loungers, and Michel begins to feel reconciled to his new life of tropical hedonism, events take an unexpected, and deadly, swerve.

"Just as I turned to give Valérie another grateful look, I heard a sort of click to my right. Then I noticed an engine noise coming from the sea, which cut out immediately. At the front of the terrace, a tall blonde woman stood up, screaming. Then came the first burst of gunfire, a brief crackle. She turned towards us, bringing her hands up to her face: a bullet had hit her in the eye, the socket was now no more than a bloody hole; then she collapsed without a sound. Then I saw our assailants, three men wearing turbans, moving swiftly in our direction, machine-guns in hand."

The terrorist attack leaves Valérie and many others dead, destroying Michel's dream of perpetual sex on the beach. After convalescing in a psychiatric hospital in Paris, he returns to Thailand to commit suicide

– revealing, finally, that the novel has been his lengthy suicide note to the reader.

Platform is notable for a number of reasons. Besides propelling Houellebecq into the leagues of literary superstardom – the very opposite of the dreaded sophomore slump – and winning him a high-profile religious-hatred trial (acquitted), the novel began a tradition of eerie prescience in Houellebecq's work which has continued to this day. *Platform* was published on 27 August 2001, less than two weeks before the Islamic terror attacks of September 11, and the specific style of attack Houellebecq describes in the novel bears a close similarity to the Bali bombings that took place a little over a year later. An even more stunning coincidence attended the release of his second "Islam novel" 13 years later. *Submission*, which imagines the capitulation of the French elite to aggressive political Islam, was released on 7 January 2015, the very day of the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris. But wait – there's more. The follow-up, *Serotonin*, with its theme of a violent uprising among French farmers, closely foreshadowed the Gilets Jaune movement, which convulsed France until the pandemic brought it to a swift end. Clearly, Houellebecq is in touch with something.

For my purposes, however, *Platform* is notable because it reveals a rather more complicated Houellebecq than we might otherwise be led to expect. Houellebecq, we are told, is the king of the depressing novel – the novel without hope, the novel of life, ultimately, without meaning. Through the lives of unlikeable, maladjusted men, the emptiness of modern Western existence – the *inescapable* emptiness – is revealed in unflinching detail. These are the real, bitter, fruits of the global triumph of liberalism. Houellebecq is the novelist of the End of History. He's the incel bard (although he is, actually, married to a much younger woman – Japanese, I think). Houellebecq is "blackpilled" – if by "blackpilled" you mean "an extreme nihilist", which not everybody who uses the term does, as we'll see.

Except Houellebecq isn't. "Blackpilled", I mean. Rather than the End of History – a flat space outside meaningful time – what *Platform* gives us instead is the shocking, violent *return* of History. The terrible, but also terribly exciting, return of contingency to a world which promised only minor ameliorations until the universe finally collapsed in on itself, billions of years in the future. (And don't forget how spectacularly life imitated art just a week or so after the book's release.)

Rather than being a novel of despair, *Platform* is a novel of great hope – or, at least, that's how I read it anyway. This is the message: life is not forever destined to be a succession of pleasant, but nonetheless meaningless, sex acts (for those who are lucky enough to get them, of course) until one expires – in flagrante, perhaps, with a nubile young Thai masseuse. No, life might also be a violent death at the hands of a jetski-riding jihadi, or something else equally unforeseen. Possibilities!

For Michel Renault, however, the attack and the death of his lover Valérie is the final straw; and the broader implication, developed further in *Submission*, is that the West is too tired and corrupt to shed its heavy skin. Only an outside force, like an aggressive religion spreading through immigration and demographic change, can transform the old order.

Be that as it may, there are plenty of other indications throughout Houellebecq's oeuvre – chinks of light, if you will – that reveal that all is not darkness and despair in his world. All we need is the eyes to see them.

It's for this reason, and others, that I was surprised to see Houellebecq labelled the master of a "blackpilled" aesthetic that's supposedly dominant among young "right-leaning" fiction writers today. In his essay, "Overdosing on the Literary Blackpill", one of the centrepieces of the IM-1776 *Art and Literature for Dissidents* pamphlet, Alex Perez makes two claims about these "dissident" writers: i) that they are simply aping Houellebecq, but lack the necessary personal charm and writerly skills to do so in a way that is anything other than repellent to most readers; and ii) that if a proper literary movement is to emerge among the "dissident right", these young writers must find a way to look outside themselves and reach a broader audience of "well-adjusted people".

I don't disagree with the broad thrust of this diagnosis, if the broad thrust is that there are some bad writers on this side of the internet, because there clearly are. The worst of their writing is very bad – derivative, charmless, pointless. And yes, some of it does look like a bad impression of Houellebecq circa his first and most incel-y novel, *Whatever*. Imitation may indeed be the sincerest form of flattery, but it seldom makes for great reading. And this is true even in the case of someone who really can write, like Cormac McCarthy. His early Faulkner impressions, especially the anti-picaresque *Suttree*, are pretty tough going, no substitute for the real thing. An obvious part of the problem is, as Perez suggests, that anybody can publish their writing on the internet now,

without any real form of quality control. (I won't get in to the bad poetry here, much of which suffers from the mistake of thinking that we can just forget the twentieth century – i.e. modernism in its various forms – and go back to writing sonnets and heroic poetry like nothing happened. We can't.)

That being said, it's also plain as day that there's a huge amount of great fiction being written by "dissident" or "right-leaning" authors, whatever you choose to call them. Some of it has been featured in this magazine. Zero HP Lovecraft's uncanny corporate nightmares ("Dagon"). Faisal Marzipan's blackly comedic reimagining of an interview for a top consultancy firm ("The Minnetonka Safe Haven Project"). Detective Wolfman's archetypal adventures ("Heartsfire"). Or what about "The Scrimshander", one of many gems in the last issue? Or "human.exe" from this issue? Not one of these stories displays any of the defects Perez identifies. Instead we have daring imagination, originality, horror, suspense, excitement, craft, as well as considerable charm and wit. These are stories that could – and should – reach the widest possible audiences. In no way is it obvious to me, then, that this "blackpilled" genre is the dominant trend. It might be *a* trend, but it doesn't strike me as something we should be unduly worried about.

And for the bad writing Perez identifies, I'm not even sure it's Houellebecq who's most to blame. Brett Easton Ellis is a very obvious influence on that kind of writing – I've handled more than a few Bateman monologues as editor of this magazine ("Then I apply a JOOV 600nm red light to my testicles for 10 minutes while I prepare the rest of my routine…") – and there's also Chuck Pahlaniuk, author of *Fight Club*, to name just two.

Where the analysis really starts to fall apart, though, is when we consider what it really means to be a "blackpilled" writer, according to Perez. He doesn't actually give a definition, but we can cobble one together easily enough. "Blackpilled" writing is full of "world-weariness" and "doom and gloom". It's written by and appeals to "depressives". Okay: so far, so uncontroversial. But then we're told these writers are also playing at being "angry young men", which rather cuts against the grain of the general apathy and indifference we tend to associate with having swallowed and digested the black pill. "Blackpilled" writing is also "base" (not "based"), full of "repulsiveness", "debased and debauched" and "antisocial" – things we needn't associate, on their own or even in combination, with being "blackpilled".

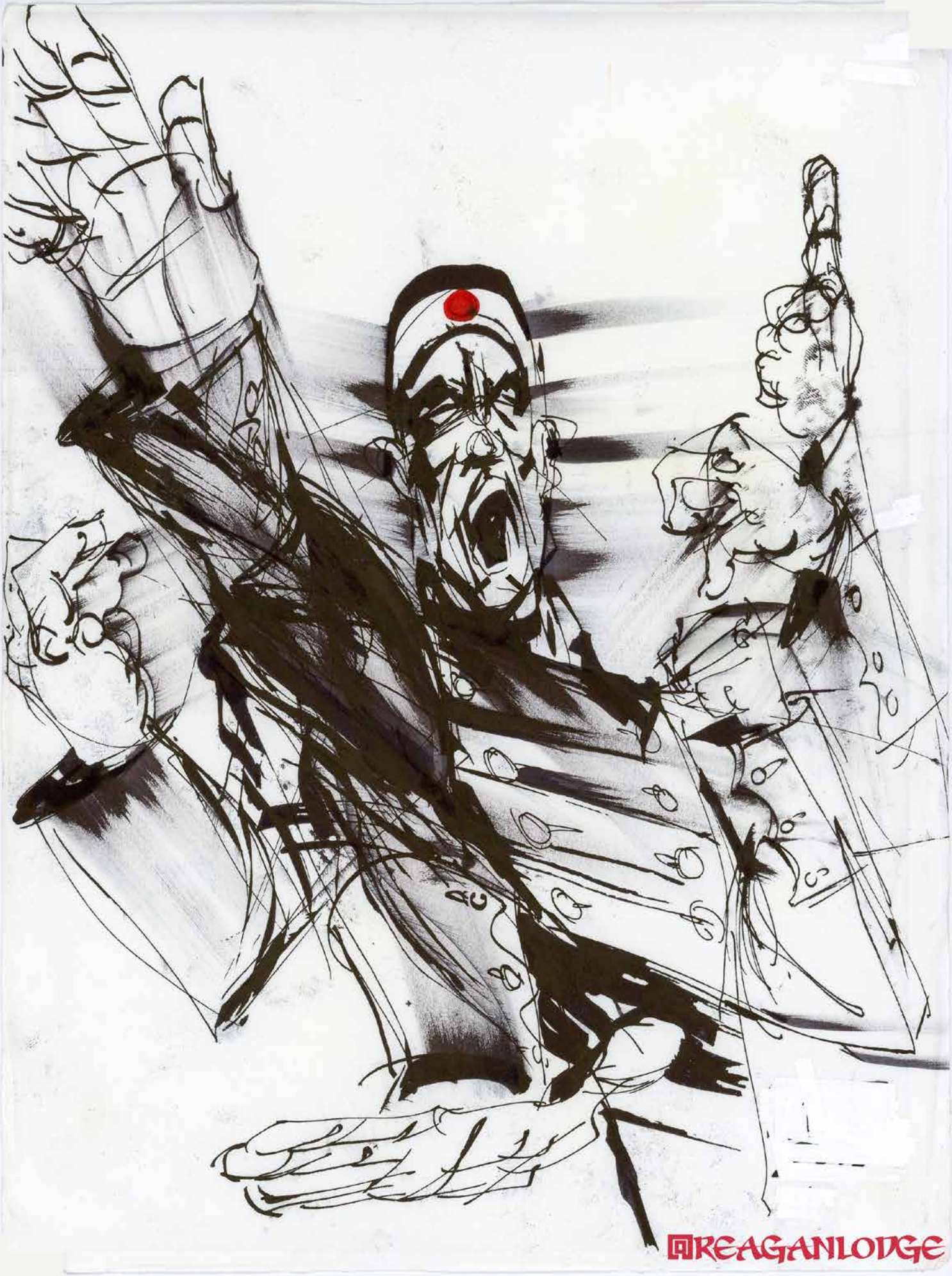
It's not just that the implicit definition is a little bit confused. It's that it's somehow capacious enough to include a writer who is so obviously not "blackpilled" that I find myself wondering what Perez is really up to here. I'm talking, believe it or not, about Bronze Age Pervert. BAP is, of course, an enormous influence on writers of every stripe on this side of the internet, and I'm sure that many of the writers who write the bad Bateman monologues have read *Bronze Age Mindset* and no doubt love it. But do I really need to say that this means practically nothing about BAP himself? Calling BAP "blackpilled" because of one tiny segment of his audience is about as meaningful as saying that, because I'm currently listening to "Easy Lover" on repeat, Phil Collins is a "dissident right" singer. Hardly.

BAP's message is the absolute opposite of "blackpilled". It feels ridiculous even to have to say this. And yet, here I am, saying it. The positivity of the book is one of the main reasons it's been so popular. Yes, we live in a trash world, a world of owned space where the young and vital are subject to a stultifying gynocracy; yes the current order is antithetical to higher forms of life; yes you feel trapped, hemmed in, circumscribed, put out to pasture – but things were this way once before and they changed radically, and now there are already signs of another radical change on the horizon. BAP isn't just offering a diagnosis of the ills of the modern world, he's very clearly pointing us towards the exit and giving us a slap on the back for good measure; although, as Perez notes, perceptively, *Bronze Age Mindset* isn't a self-help book. If it's *Lift, Love, Laugh* you want, you'll have to wait for my next book (I've got dibs on that title, by the way, so hands off!).

But Perez doesn't want you to pay attention to the message of *Bronze Age Mindset*. This, I think, is where the true purpose of the essay is revealed. I'll let Perez speak for himself now:

"*BAM* is certainly a 'blackpilled text', but the driving force behind the book is not the content, but the… chaotic energy that permeates it, which is what young writers should be taking away from it. What a book says stylistically and aesthetically is often of greater import than whatever thematic point of view it's trying – and often failing – to propagate."

So what you're saying is… the famous BAP patois is what really matters about *Bronze Age Mindset*? Ignore the content: it's just a vehicle for BAP to break the rules


REAGANLODGE

of strict grammar and coin some funny new slang words? As much as it may be true that BAP-speak has become ubiquitous among little (and even large) frog accounts, this is well and truly ass-backwards. Of course Perez is welcome to dislike *Bronze Age Mindset*. But to suggest that the "driving force behind the book", the reason why it's become a subject of feverish excitement everywhere from Twitter to the corridors of the White House, is not the actual themes of the work, but the energy, style and aesthetic – as if, in any case, form and content could be separated in such a way here – seems, frankly, bizarre.

At last, then, I think we can see what the "blackpilled" epithet really amounts to. Rather than being a criticism of a genuine identifiable movement, it's just a tag for things the author doesn't like, and one of those things is clearly *Bronze Age Mindset*.

Now, before you interject that this laddy doth protest too much, let me say that I don't think the attempt to minimise the message or enduring impact of *Bronze Age Mindset* is confined to just this essay. In actual fact, I see this as a broader phenomenon. There are plenty who have been happy to ride the BAP wave and be associated with him – at a safe distance – but who have never believed a word of what he says in *Bronze Age Mindset*. This became abundantly clear after BAP's most recent banning from Twitter last year, when many accounts that had reaped the benefits of his largesse turned on him the moment he was gone. Despite the book's incontrovertible importance, it's just too extreme, too off-the-wall – nowhere near "respectable" enough for those "dissidents" who are merely waiting for the door to be opened, at long last, to let them in to the establisment party. *Finally, we've arrived!* Seen in this light, Perez's use of words like "base", "debased and debauched" and "anti-social", but especially his injunction for "blackpilled" writers to appeal to "well-adjusted people", looks rather more telling. So too does his insistence on referring to *Bronze Age Mindset* as "the most popular *self-published book* [my emphasis] among the blackpilled writers". This can only be a deliberate slight against a book which has sold tens of thousands of copies, consistently outselling the most "popular" astroturfed writers in fields like ancient history, the classics and philosophy. As far as white pills go, I'd say those sale figures are a pretty big one, wouldn't you?

Of course, this would hardly be the first time that "dangerous" thinkers have been neutered by those of a more – how shall we say? – mainstream inclination. (Note: I'm not saying that a mainstream influence is something we shouldn't be trying to cultivate, especially since we already have a pretty significant one.) Nietzsche is an obvious example here. I don't mean how his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, selectively edited his work the better to fit with her own ideological commitments. Rather, I mean the way that French postmodernists like Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault focused on his style and method ("genealogy") at the expense of the substance of what he actually said. This gave us the largely unrecognisable "New Nietzsche", as well as absurdities like the "Nietzschean" Foucault, as fitting a candidate for the Last Man as you could hope to find: a bald, bespectacled boy-lover who found nirvana spreading HIV in the bath-houses of San Francisco. No less absurd is the "liberal" Nietzsche of Bernard Williams, a sort of Humean sceptic who, by an extreme act of leg-crossing, can be made to sit nicely among the grave philosophers of the Anglo-American analytic tradition. Pfffffft.

In all honesty, though, I think BAP will continue to speak to readers on his own terms, long after most of his current interpreters and critics have vanished from sight.

What remains of Perez's essay is an attempt to provide positive advice for how the "blackpilled" writers can build a movement that will gain wider recognition. Building a movement, especially a political movement, brings its own problems. One of the most fundamental issues is one that dogs all explicitly political art: Is the art's defining feature its political message? If so, what is that message? What makes an artist a "dissident right" artist, as opposed to something else?

Wouldn't it be more sensible for the aim to be to make good art, first and foremost? After all, by their own admission, most artists have deliberately abandoned the traditional principles of aesthetics (representation, harmony, conformity with nature, etc.), leaving artists on the right with a totally open goal. Being able to depoliticise the issue – to say that artists on the right are simply doing art – could also be an advantage in certain situations. This would be my suggestion, or the beginning of one, but it needs development, and here is not the place to do that.

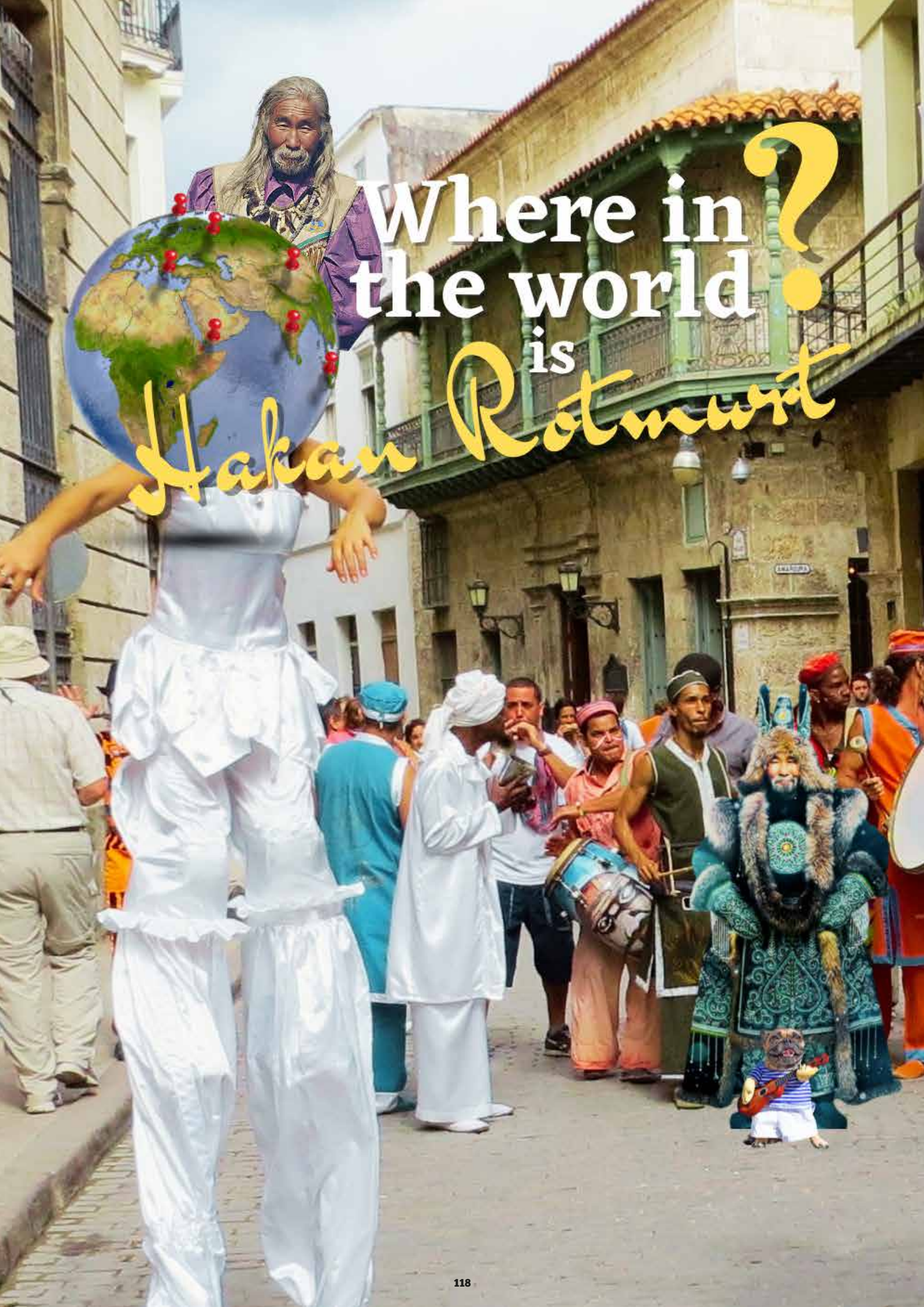
These and many more questions remain to be resolved at present. But if there's one thing I know already, it's that the "dissident right" won't win any battles by tilting at imaginary enemies – or by biting the hand that has so generously fed it.

Ancient men conquered cities, put them to the sword and flame. Meanwhile, you "unbox" male grooming gadget and film "reaction" video.
YOU ARE GAY!!

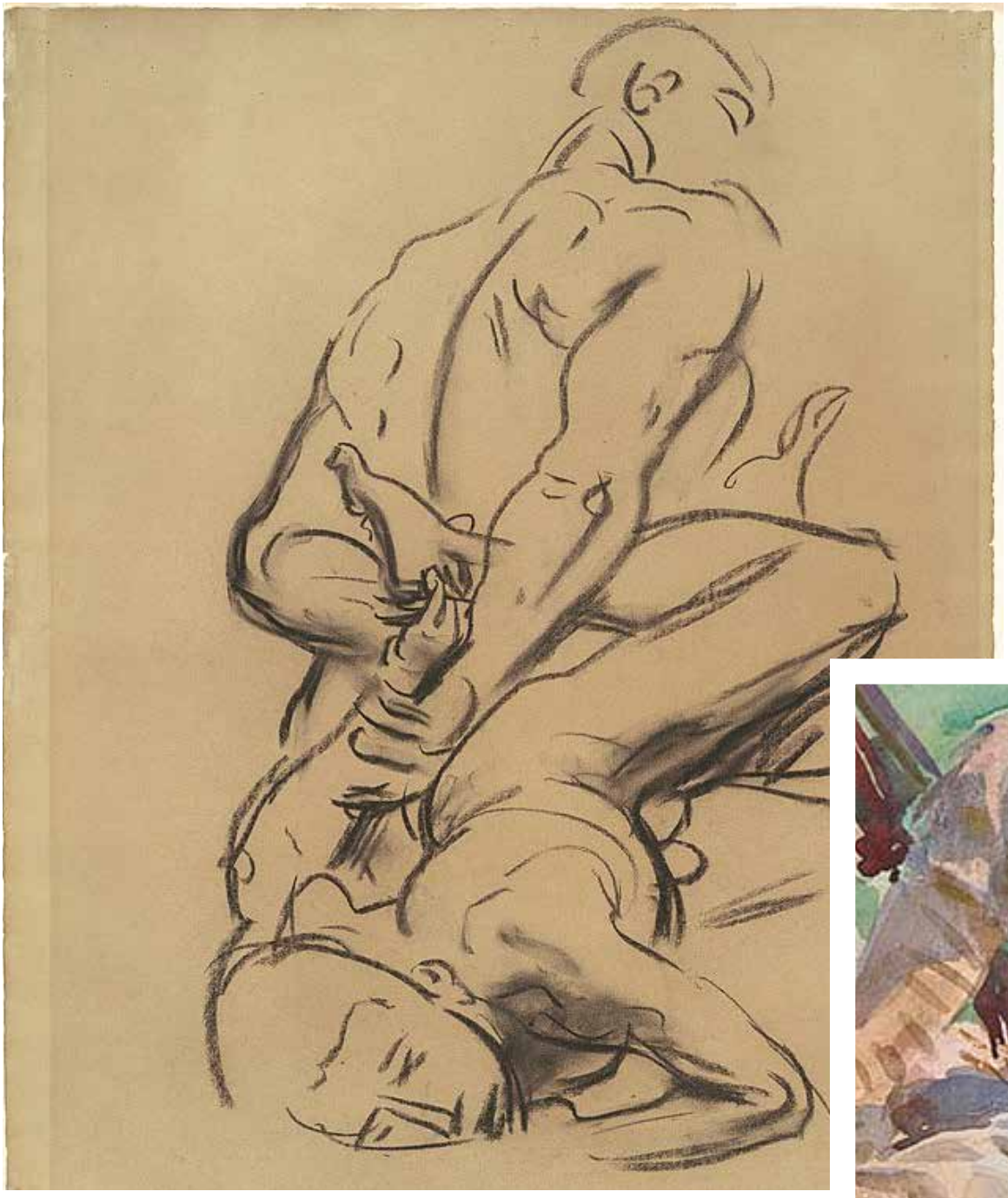
CUCK OPERATOR

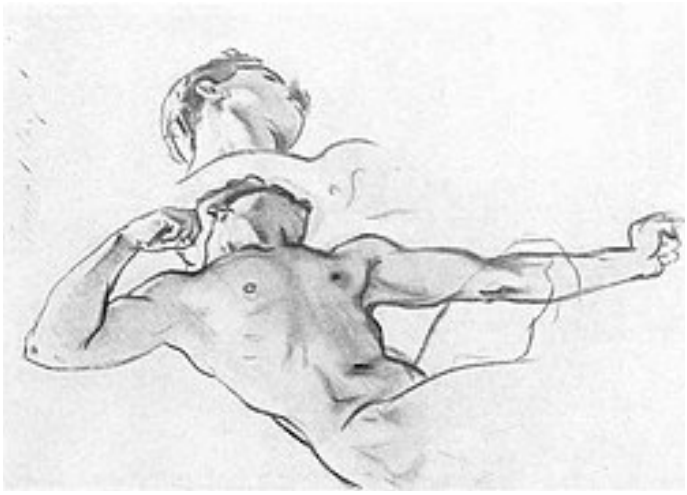
COFFEE KOMPANY

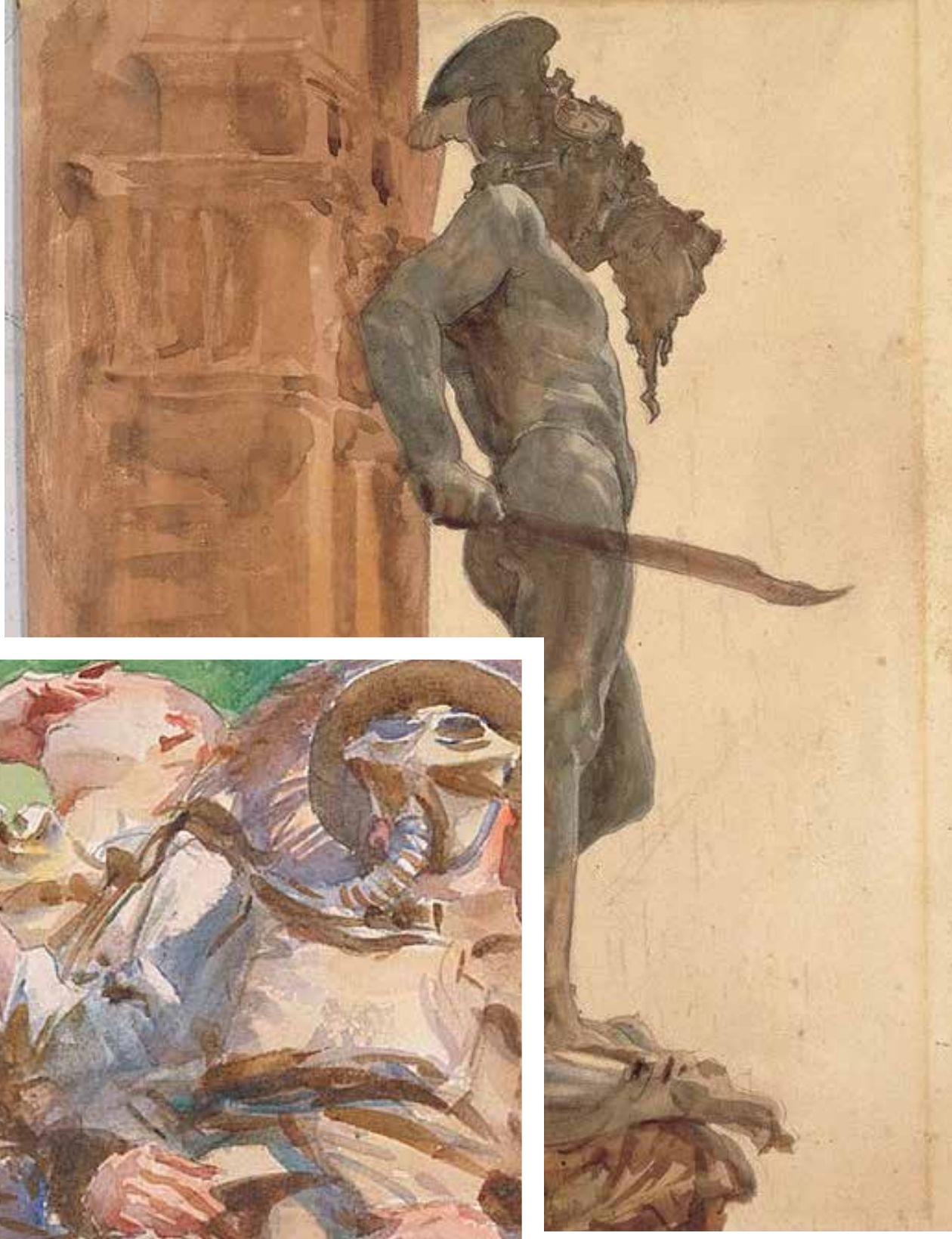
IMAGINE THE SMELL.


Where in the world is Hakan Rotmurt?

CAN YOU FIND HIM?







Clockwise from left: Study for 'Judgment' (1903-1916) Sketch of Persueus, Florence (1907); Two Soldiers in Arras (1918); The Archers (?1910?)

SARA SASS, author of *There Are Some Secrets*, provides a retrospective on America's Gilded Age through the work of John Singer Sargent, much of which is now being made available through Wikimedia Commons

JOHN SINGER SARGENT

JOHN SINGER SARGENT

Money, blood, honor. The triptych of the Gilded Age is writ large on the heart of every westerner, railroad tracks and stock market dips in our blood. While Hollywood loves to emphasize the "robber baron" trope, what is lost is how these men and women loved their country. When given the choice to retire anywhere, they chose the American woods. When given the choice to build anywhere, they chose European Gothic and Romanesque castles in American cities. When given the choice to uplift their communities, every single man swore "yes! Yes! Yes!" This is the backdrop to which Gilded Age portraitist John Singer Sargent lived and thrived.

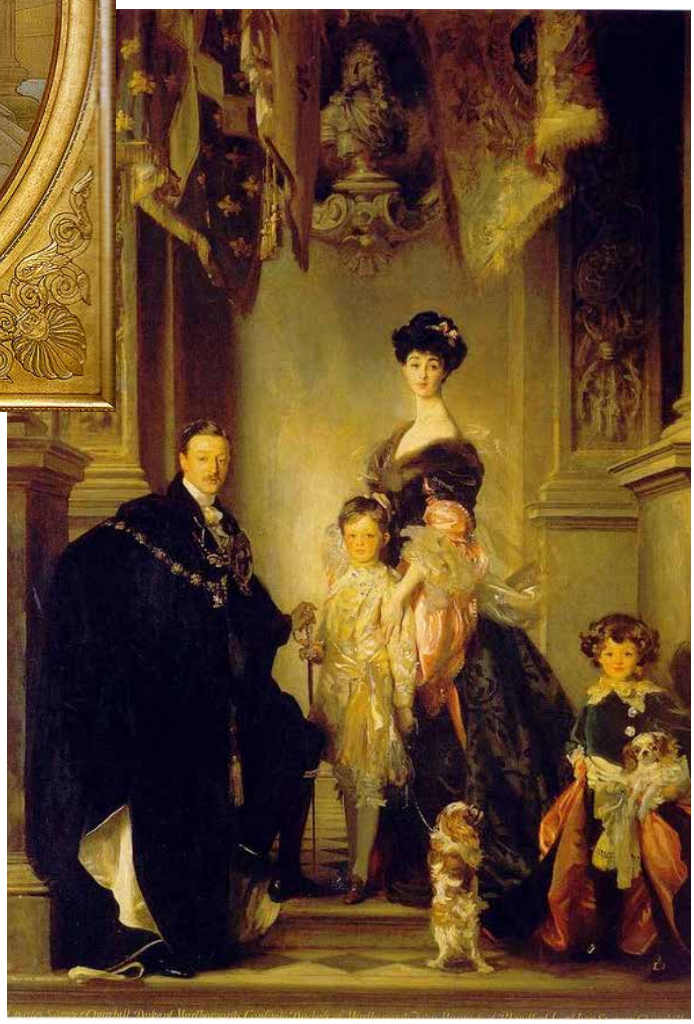
Recently, Sargent's lesser-known male nudes surfaced on Wikimedia commons. These mustachioed muscled men may have visited Sargent after a Vanderbilt ball in Manhattan, or in a dark Moroccan room off the Mediterranean. Sargent lived in Europe but visited the United States often to paint wealthy patrons. His paintings were simultaneously aloof and intimate. Such a mode fetched up to $5000 per painting at the time (around $150,000).

Among Sargent's customers were railroad barons such as the Vanderbilts. Vanderbilt contemporary and railroad baron Thomas Durant recognized the need for railroads while observing prairie grain transport in 1840. He needed no stroke of genius, nor lap of luxury trip. In 1853, Durant won a bid to expand the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad and did so using wooden bridges across the Mississippi River. Durant was unstoppable, buying supreme yacht Idler and racing her in the New York regatta and 1870 America's Cup. While wealth today chooses to flash plastic tits and gold coins on the decks of rented yachts moored in Dubai, Durant amassed half a million acres in the Adirondacks and retired there with his family in his fifties. He encouraged his son and daughter to love beautiful things, and his son William West Durant went on to design the Great Camp structure (now seen today in Camp David). What cities will be named for Saudi playboys who traffick young women? What cities will be named for American multimillionaires who divorce wife after wife? Durant, Iowa was named for Durant and his name is on various schools around the American Midwest.

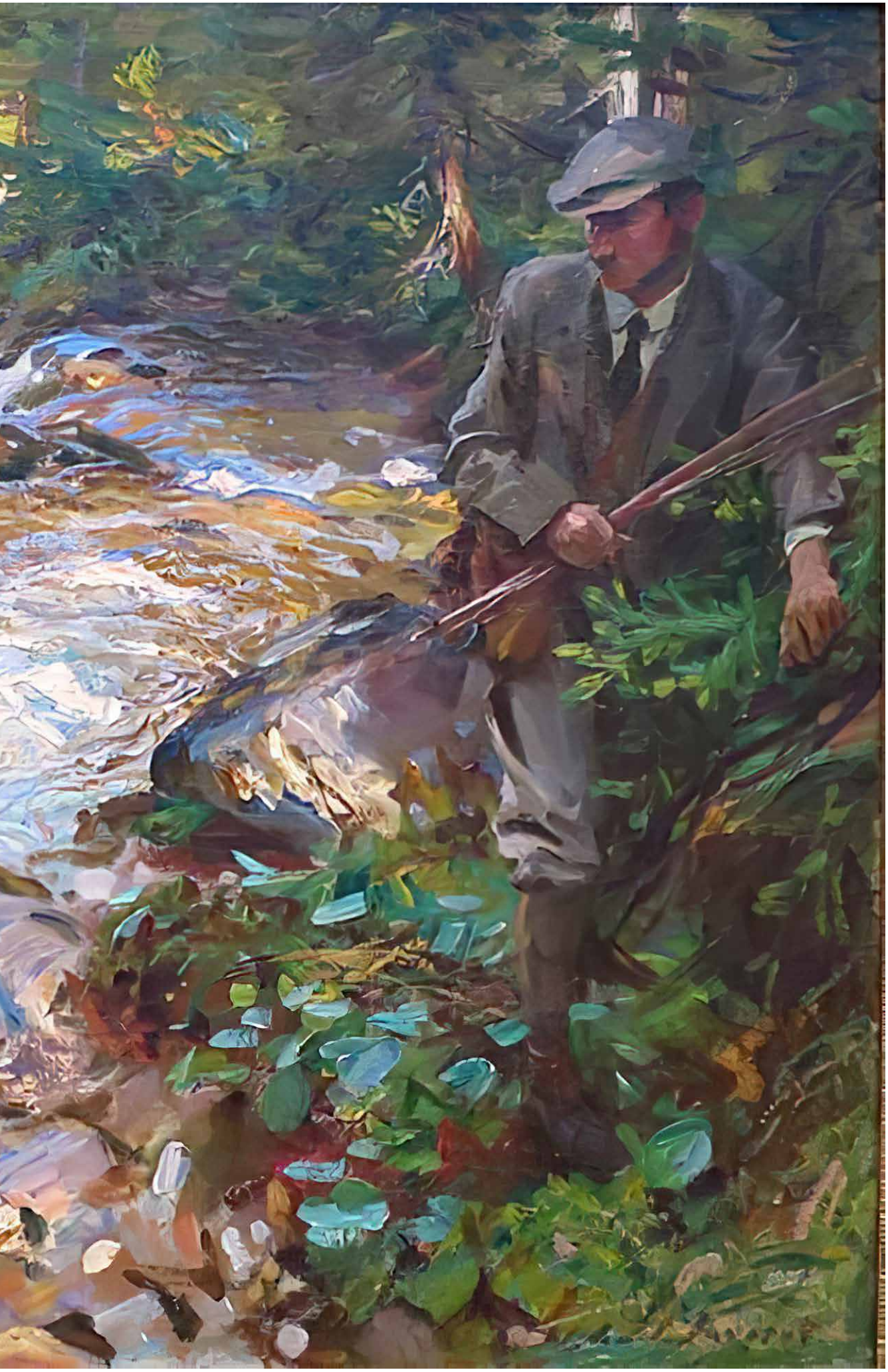
The taste for blood in Durant's mouth, running cotton from the occupied South to the North during the Civil War, didn't come from nowhere. Pumped up with a fearlessness that has long since died out, American cities moved. In 1849, playground for the wealthy Astor Place, New York City, erupted in riots. Irish immigrants, long pushed to the bottom of the social totem pole by Protestant New Yorkers, frothed at the mouth as they saw a British tragedian play a beloved Irish actor's role in Macbeth. With Irishwomen regularly trafficked into brothels and public schools denying Irish children a seat, Irish immigrants charged the Astor Opera House. Twenty people were killed in the tumultuous Shakespeare riots. Yet New York City moved on, never once waving a white flag of "privilege" or otherwise. Sargent depicted this massive civilizational burden – the burden of love and passion, and the stoicism that must exist in its face – in Atlas and the Hesperides (1922-1925). The work now hangs in a city built by Irish dockworkers – Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

The importance of education – however attained – was not lost on Oliver Ames who built the first transcontinental railway in the United States in 1866. Ames didn't finish school and worked at selling shovels for years with his father. Shovels were needed by homesteaders, miners and even geniuses. Nikola Tesla dug ditches with a shovel for two dollars a day while hard-up in the 1880s. With his millions, Ames dedicated money to three things upon his death: his family, his church and a public library in his Massachusetts hometown.

With the world spread at their feet, with cities opening their mansion doors to reveal endless finery, the men who stood at the top of the world reached for just a handful of things. Family. Church. Land. Knowledge.



Top: Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1890); bottom: Charles, 9th Duke of Marlborough, with Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, and their sons John, the 10th Duke of Marlborough, and Lord Ivor Spencer-Churchill (1905); inset: Atlas and the Hesperides"(1922-1925); over the page: Trout stream in the Tyrol (1914)



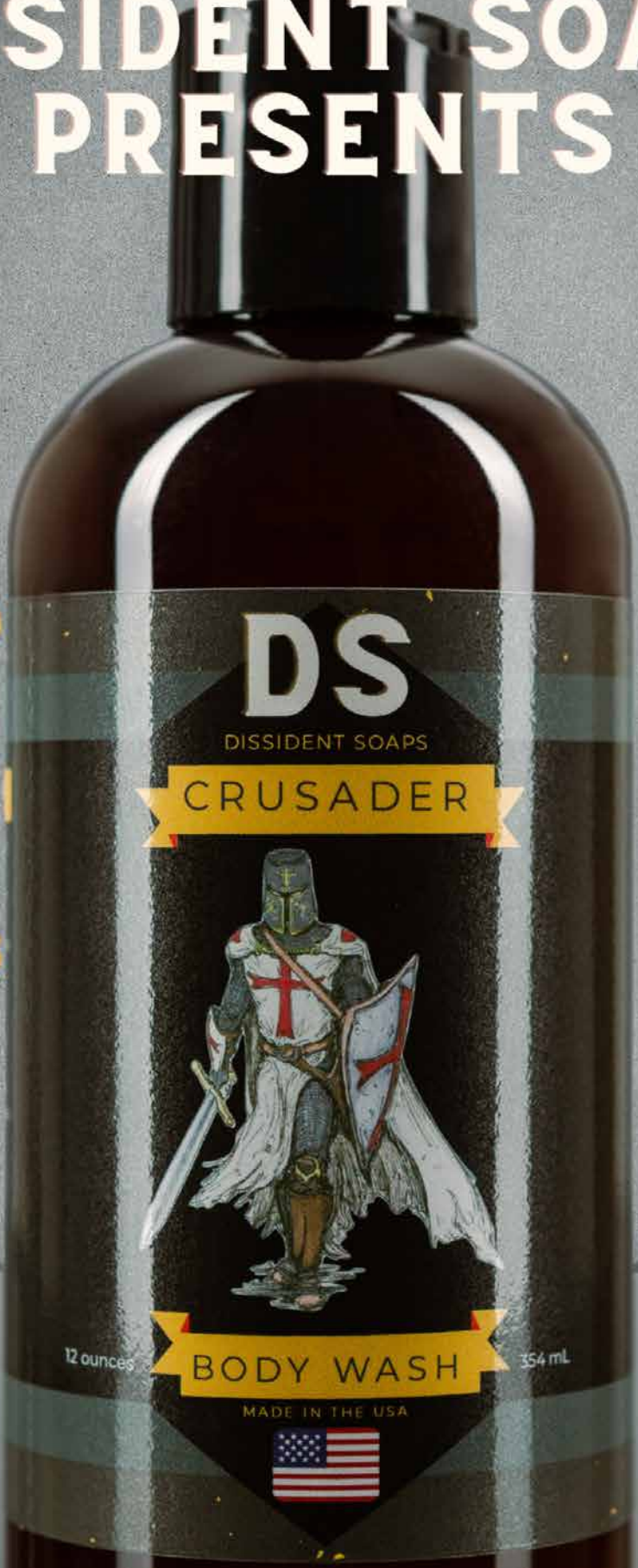
REAGANLODGE

DISSIDENT SOAPS PRESENTS

CEDARWOOD

EUCALYPTUS

FENNEL



ALL NATURAL BODY WASH

@dissidentsoaps @dissidentsoaps https://dissidentsoaps.com

THE ONE AND ONLY

MILK-LY!

RAW MILK. THE ONE AND ONLY HEALTH DRINK.

Dear Mr Thiel,

William Wheelwright (@ploughmansfolly) pens a heartfelt letter to the king-maker of the right-wing bodybuilders, the billionaire entrepreneur, venture capitalist and political activist Peter Thiel. He lays out a project for a new kind of schooling that will produce a new kind of young American man. All that stands between ideal and reality is the small matter of a few spare Thielbuxxx...

Dear Mr. Thiel,

Let me thank you for your prompt reply to my original inquiry. I cannot overstate how glad I am to hear of your interest in our enterprise.

You requested the enclosure of my ten-year vision for the revitalization of the American male. What follows is the fulfillment of that request.

As you know, we are at war. Our enemies' bloodlust will be satisfied with nothing short of the total destruction of Nature itself. One of the primary theatres of this conflict has been the assault on manliness. The objective of this assault has been to dissociate biological maleness from any pre-existing essence or purpose. Due to widespread weakness and complacency, we have suffered many losses on this battlefield already. Look no further than the current state of the average adolescent male: obese, directionless, addicted to masturbation, one foot in the metaverse via gaming or social media. There is no greater indictment of the current state of our civilization that this sorry figure. Consequently, there is no more apt starting point from which to stimulate a reinvigoration of Western culture than the minds and bodies of young men.

Let me begin from where we want to end up, and work backwards. The American male population must become, as it was within living memory, a standing army of extremely fit, skilled and knowledgeable men, prepared to die in defense of their country. (Let me be specific about what I mean by "their country": I mean the exact land and people from which any given individual citizen comes. I do not mean some nebulous idea, some flag, or some document. The ubiquitous lie that "America is an idea", is actually bizarrely true, because what we mean by America is something intangible in its ephemerality, because its definition depends on the background of the soldier who defends it. It varies depending on the postage stamp whence that soldier comes. America is an idea: the idea of a square mile and the people who dwell therein.)

What kind of educational ordeal would the average American male have to undergo in order to meet the above description? How can his slovenliness be transformed into sharpness? These are the questions that our program answers.

From the first day a boy arrives at our campus at the age of twelve, to when he leaves at 18, he is sent to live with the herds in the mountains. His diet is founded on the milk from the herds that he tends to in concert with his fellows (we have herds of both cows and sheep for dairy); the eggs from the ducks that are rotated through a cascade of fertigation ponds in the upland forest; honey harvested from the bees hived on the forest edges;, and whatever he can forage (instructors are versed in the local flora and fungi to prevent accidental intoxication). He lives under a canvas tent on the edge of the forest with his classmates. He has absolutely no access to any form of digital technology while he is on campus.

Our pedagogical approach is based on the understanding that in order to re-kindle an understanding among young men of their own masculinity, they must be immersed in nature. Our enemies have mastered the art of childhood indoctrination, and their process always begins with the dissociation of the child from the natural world. Learning takes place indoors, they imply, especially on the computer. This is as cynical as it is insidiously intended: it ultimately leads to the belief that the various man-made realities he finds there — the internet, pornography, the soon-to-be metaverse etc. — are more real than the wind and the soil and the waters. This false understanding then comes to occupy the individual's consciousness. Immersed in these man-made alternate realities, the young man thinks to himself, "I can be whoever and whatever I want to be. I am unlimited by the impositions of my biology and the manner of my upbringing." In the real world, the acceptance of these limits is the prerequisite of their transcendence. Immersion in nature forces our students to come to terms with who they are, where they come from and what they are capable of on any given day. In short, it is real,

not make-believe, and therein lies its didactic power.

What does the student's day to day life entail? Our life here is anchored by the realities of farming. We are running a dairy, which represents the foundation of the diet of everyone who lives here. The students milk and move the animals twice daily. They are milked by hand in our mobile parlors, which move along with the herds. Any excess production is entrusted to the local churches for distribution to the needy. Because we have many hands per animal, this is relatively light work. We also care for our ducks and our bees. We do not garden or practice any other form of agriculture than what I have described; although there are many mature fruit trees scattered throughout, in the sunny spots where pasture meets forest. We decided on dairy from the outset because we felt it covered the maximum span of our dietary needs with the least input from offsite sources. Our cows and sheep only eat grass and the hay we make here (and we try to keep hay consumption to a minimum by winter grazing). We know from years' experience that the diet provided by the aforementioned sources provides more than enough nutrition to sustain our active lifestyle and the robust strength training goals for all students. Since dairy always involves the slaughter of the animals whose birth is required to stimulate lactation, we do also eat meat. Aquaculture in some of our many mountain ponds is another potential protein source; although we have yet to explore it seriously.

In contradistinction to the situation in the American public school system, for us, physical education is not a tertiary, box-ticking exercise. It is the foundation of our entire educational system. After morning milking, all students spend two hours in physical activity directed toward increased strength. Since we have no gym here, we have had to get creative. We especially enjoy weighted hill sprints to failure (using makeshift rucksacks filled with stones). We do pull ups in the larches, and notch handles into large logs of varying sizes for squats, deadlifts, etc. Students enter at different heights and weights, and so the only uniform expectation we can impose upon them is that they are becoming stronger all the time. This we impose without reservation. Furthermore, all students must become proficient in some form of hand-to-hand combat.

Besides physical education, several other classes are required. These include music (when we have enough students, we hope to have an orchestra and choral ensemble). Our hay barn is our practice space, it has excellent acoustics. Horsemanship and riflery are also required. Classes of progressing difficulty in mathematics, the Western literary canon, philosophy and other subjects are offered on an elective basis. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests, but are also required, having chosen this or that elective, to commit to it for a matter of months at a minimum. We utterly reject the notion of the "well-rounded world citizen" that has become so common in higher education circles in recent decades. Over the course of his years here, the average student becomes highly capable in a specific skill or area of knowledge. Our objective, as I hope is clear by now, is the manufacture of warriors, each skilled in specific areas.

In the evenings, the boys take to team field sports — usually soccer since it requires the least gear — and individual study. There are no showers here: baths are taken year-round in the spring-fed pond at the top of the property. The day ends with a bonfire — often the more literary boys will relate stories from the books they have been reading. The baritones sing the ancient hymns. Lights out at 9pm.

Mr. Thiel, we require further funding. We simply cannot keep up with the demand we are experiencing from prospective students. The young men of America are clamoring for the opportunity to embrace their nature without being hampered by the badgerings of ten thousand crusty schoolmarms. Many of our graduates are eager to open campuses in their own areas.

Every boy forced through the spiritual wood chipper than is the modern American socialization-via-public-education process represents a living tragedy. We can define tragedy as squandered potential. Before we even begin to list the practical reasons why the assault on manliness has been such a disaster for society, we must consider the deep injustice of this situation. For the sake not merely of society, which flounders and collapses in the absence of true male strength and leadership, but for that of the souls of the boys who are daily wasted as spiritual cannon-fodder in the War on Nature, we must offer a widespread alternative on a broad scale.

Once again I thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

William Wheelwright

OUR DEBT TO ANTIQUITY

TADEUSZ STEFAN ZIELIŃSKI

BONFIRE BOOKS

HM Government
Census 2022
Yamnaya? Just tick the box

There is an idea of a MAN'S WORLD reader, some kind of abstraction — but there is no real me; only an entity, something illusory.

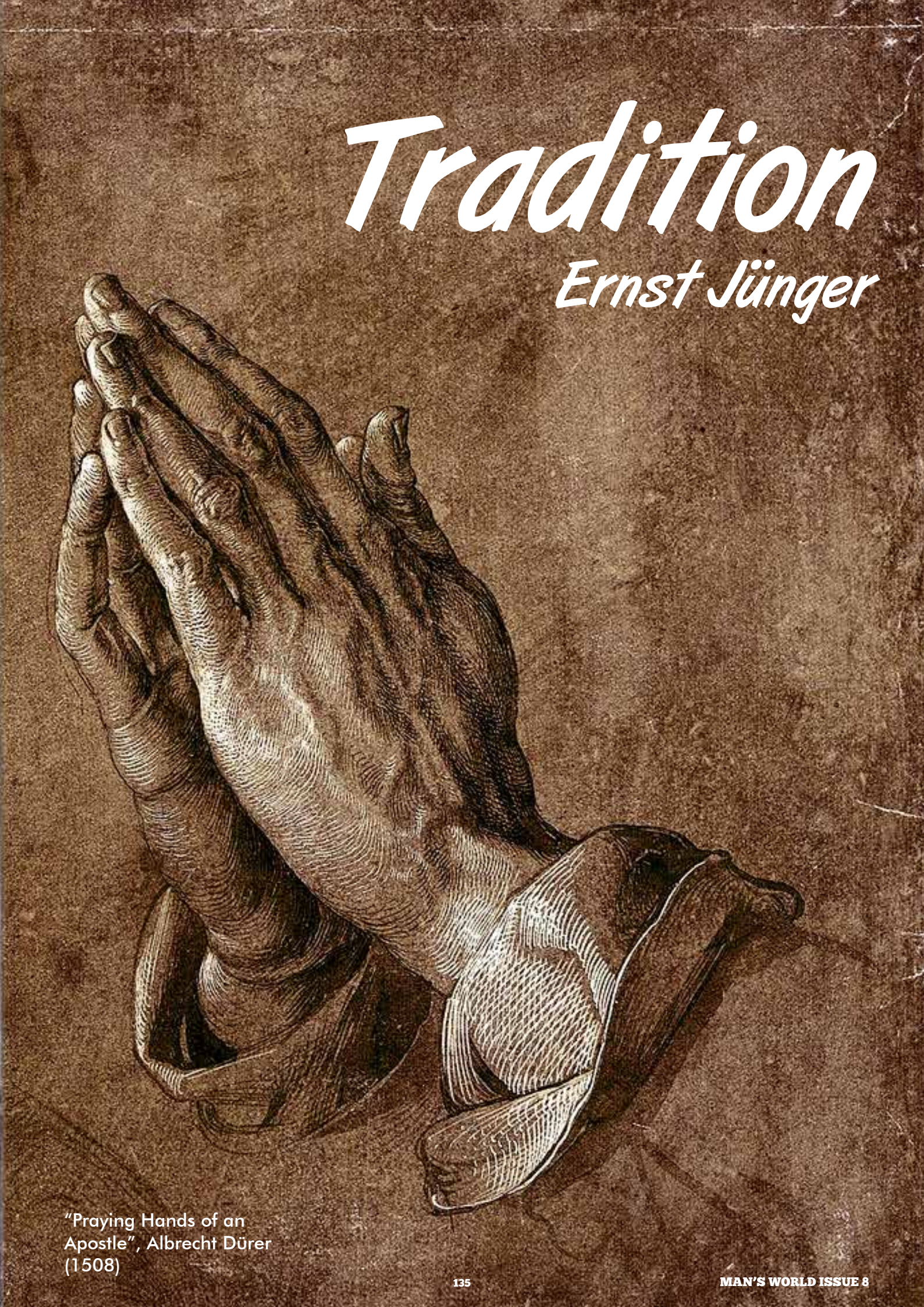
And though I can hide my cold gaze, and you can read my tweets and hear my voice in Twitter Spaces and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there.

It is hard for me to make sense on any given level. My self is fabricated, an aberration. I am a noncontingent human being.

MAN'S WORLD: *For the man who takes disintegration in his stride! (Now where are those videotapes?)*

Tradition

Ernst Jünger



"Praying Hands of an Apostle", Albrecht Dürer (1508)

Tradition - is a noble and proud word for a race that has the will to put the emphasis back on the side of blood. The individual does not dwell alone in a physical place, but as a member of a community, for which he has to live and, if necessary, to sacrifice himself. That is a realization which probably every man who has a sense of responsibility possesses and defends - in his own particular way and with his own particular means. But the individual is bound not only to a higher community in space, but also in an even more significant, though invisible, way in time.
A father's blood pulses through one's own, he lives on in realms and bonds that they have created, preserved and defended. Created, preserved and defended, so that he might take the work from their fist into his own and manage it worthily. The man of the present is the center between the past and the future. Life shoots like the glowing spark of a fuse through the bond of the sexes, it burns them out and, nevertheless, establishes a connection which goes from the beginning to the end. Soon the man of the present will also be a has-been,

A new translation by

MARTIN

but the thought gives him peace and security that his work and his deeds do not perish with him, but that they have laid the foundation on which the future man, the heir, stands with weapons and tools.

That which makes an action historical: that it is not in itself and is not done for itself, but that it is structured into a meaningful action, that it is directed by the deeds of one's forefathers and aimed into the mysterious realm of the unborn. It is dark on this side and on the other side of the deed, its roots disappear in the gray of the past, its fruits fall into the land of inheritance, which the deed will never see, and yet it is determined and preserved from both sides, and therein lies its timeless splendor and its highest glory.

This is what distinguishes the hero and the warrior from the countryman and the adventurer, that he draws his strength from higher reserves than from his personal ones, and that the glowing beacon of his deed is not a flickering fire, but the blazing fire in which the future is forged around the past. In the greatness of the adventurer there is something accidental, a wild incursion into colorful landscapes, which also has its beauty, but in the hero the necessary, fate-conditioned is completed, he is the uniquely moral man, who is significant not only in himself, not only today, but also for all and for any time.

On whatever battlefield and at whatever seemingly lost post - where a past is to be preserved and fought for a future, no deed can be lost. The individual can certainly be lost, but his destiny, his happiness and his perfection is a downfall for a higher, further goal. The man without ties dies and with him his work, because it was tailored in its dimensions only to himself; the hero perishes, but his demise is like the blood-red setting of the sun, which promises a new and more beautiful tomorrow. In the same way, we must remember the great war as a glowing sunset, in the colors of which a glorious tomorrow is already determined. So we must think of our fallen friends, and recognize in their demise the sign of completion, the sharpest affirmation

Ernst Jünger as a soldier during the First World War. As for so many of his generation who fought, the experience was a transformative one for him. His experiences are detailed in Storm of Steel, which is available in superior translation from Rogue Scholar Press. (shop.aer.io/roguescholar).

The Battle of Rossbach, referenced by Jünger towards the end of the text. The battle took place on 5 November 1757 and saw Fredrick the Great of Prussia, against overwhelming odds, destroy a much larger French and Imperial German army.

of life itself. Far as from disgusting filth, we must refrain from the evaluation of the Kramerseele "that it was all in vain," if we want to find our happiness in living in the space of destiny and flowing in the mysterious stream of blood, if we want to work in a meaningful, significant landscape, and not vegetate in a time and space in which we have been placed by the accident of birth.

No, birth must not be an accident for us! It is the act that immerses us in our actual earthly realm, and that determines, with a thousand symbolic threads, our place in the life-world. Through it we become members of the nation, the community of those bound by birth. From here we enter life, from a fixed point, but in a movement that began long before us and will end late after us. We are passing through only one section of this vast trajectory, but over this section we must not only carry a full inheritance, but be equal to all the demands of time.

Now, vile minds, debauched in the squalor of our great cities, come up with the wisdom that our birth was a game of chance, and that "we could just as well have been born French as Germans." Of course, for the one who thinks like that, it is true. He is an accidental man. The happiness that lies in feeling born with necessity into a great destiny, in feeling its tensions and struggles as one's own, and in rising - or sinking - with it, is foreign to him.

No, birth must not be an accident for us!

These brains always come out when misfortune weighs on the communities united by birth, and this is characteristic for them. (We should briefly point out the last, very skilful move of the intellect to parasitically and destructively penetrate into the community of blood and to distort its essence intellectually, namely by the term "community of fate", which at first sight seems to be quite appropriate. But the community of destiny also includes a negro who was taken by surprise at the beginning of the war in Germany, who was drawn into our path of suffering from bread to root vegetables. A "community of destiny" in this sense is formed by the passengers of a sinking steamer, in contrast to the community of blood of the crew of a warship sinking with the flag flying).

The national man values being born into a firmly defined boundary, indeed he sees in it his highest pride. When he transcends his borders, he does so not by flowing formlessly beyond them, but by extending them into the future and into the past. Its strength rests in the fact that it possesses direction, and with it a more instinctive security, an orientation from the ground up, which is given to the blood, and which does not need the fluctuating and changing signal lanterns of sophisticated concepts. Thus life grows into a greater unity, and thus it becomes itself a unity by being meaningfully bound in each of its moments.

Sharply delineated by its boundaries, by sacred rivers, fearsome mountains and vast seas, the life of a national race fixes itself in space. Based on a tradition and directed towards a distant future, it is fixed in time. Woe to him who cuts off his own roots, he becomes an impotent, a parasitic man. To deny the past is also to deny the future, and to perish with the volatile waves of the present.

But for the nationalist there is an equally great danger, that is that he forgets the present. Having tradition implies the duty to live out this tradition. The nation is not a house on which each generation, like a generation of coral, only has to add a new story, or in whose space, set once and for all, it only has to exist in a bad way. A castle, a solidly built subur-

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The German theologian Martin Lu ther, as painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Jünger quotes twice from Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is our God" in the final paragraphs.

ban house, seems to be set once and for all after its completion. But soon a new generation, out of new needs, sees the necessity of important changes. Or it burns down, it is destroyed, and a new, different building rises above the old foundation walls. The facades change, every stone is replaced, and yet, in a very special sense, it remains the same house. Was it the perfect house only in the Renaissance or in the Baroque, did it have then a style that is valid forever? No, but what it was then is somehow hidden in what it is today.

Today it is perhaps coolly structured as an expression of a feeling in values of the highest, active energy, but this expression is only conceivable on the layered ground of a tradition. In every line and in every scale, the past mysteriously resonates, and yet it is the present that determines the face of the whole, so that it lifts us up, carries us away in the feeling: this is us, this is ourselves! And so it must be.

So also the blood of the individual is mixed from a thousand dark bloodstreams, and yet the individual is not only the sum of his ancestors, not only the bearer of their will and qualities, but also in distinct, bounded peculiarity - he is he himself. And the same is the case with the most comprehensive form of the nation, with the state. Yesterday we had an empire, today we have a republic, tomorrow perhaps another empire, and the day after tomorrow a dictatorship. Each of these structures, as an invisible inheritance, more or less hidden under its formal language, also carries the content of the former, but each has the duty to be completely itself, because only in this way the full utilization of the power is achieved.

This is true also in this exact minute for every one of us. To be an heir is not to be an imitator. And to live in a tradition does not mean to limit oneself to this tradition. To inherit a house means to take care of it, but not to make a museum out of it, in which the ancestral home stands untouched. "His Kingdom [Reich] is for ever," said Luther, who laid the axe to the building of a church; he knew that a kingdom and a building, a power and its temporal expression are not the same.

"His Kingdom is for ever" – so too for us, and in this will to the essential lies our real tradition, for which one can stand up just as sharply under the roof of a republic as under that of an empire. The important thing is that the great current of blood forces all the resources and institutions of the time into its service. Whether you fight a battle with the methods of a republic or with those of a board of directors, it amounts to the same thing - if only you win it. In the age of the cold steel one must know how to win with the sword, in the age of the machine with machine guns, tanks, bomb squadrons and gas attacks. In a patrimonial age, an army must believe in fighting for its king and lord; in an age of the masses, it may desire to go to the death for any progress of a social or economic nature. Always his ideas, his faith and his morality will shimmer, yes, must shimmer, in the colorful reflections of temporal illumination, but what matters is not his insights, questions and apparent goals, but that all his power be realized within the framework of the "kingdom."

This realization is also our duty. We, too, must try to put the tremendous, bound energy of the modern state at the service of the empire, to wrest it from the clutches of the rational intellect, and to subject it to the laws of blood down to the last flywheel, the last bit of iron. Only then will we live tradition. We are still far from it. It is precisely the emphasis on the external form of tradition, which is characteristic of the national youth of today, that is a sign of a lack of inner strength. We do not live in museums, but in an active, hostile world. It is not a living tradition that old Fritz is painted on every cigar box, and that every ashtray and every pair of trousers receives its black-and-white bread stamp. This is advertising in the worst sense, just as the majority of our parades, commemorations and honorary days are only the most tasteless advertising, cast-iron kitsch, through which one gains nothing but followers.

Prepare yourselves for a new Rossbach in the most characteristic formations of our time, then the old one up there will be most pleased. Do not write Frederick novels, but the national novel of our time, whose material is as multifarious as life itself before your eyes. Do not live as dreamers in sunken times, but try to give the Republic clout and power directed by the current of blood, or smash it in two if it does not want to become tough. Do not reminisce about the cane of Frederick William II, which was essential in his time, but recognize that such methods of social control depend on the times, and that today it is essential to find a solution that will include the worker in the national front, as has already been done in other countries.

Be fully who you are; then you will be living both the future and the past in the fiery focus of the present and in your own deeds. Then you will have real, living tradition and not only its flickering reflection that can be placed in any suburban cinema.

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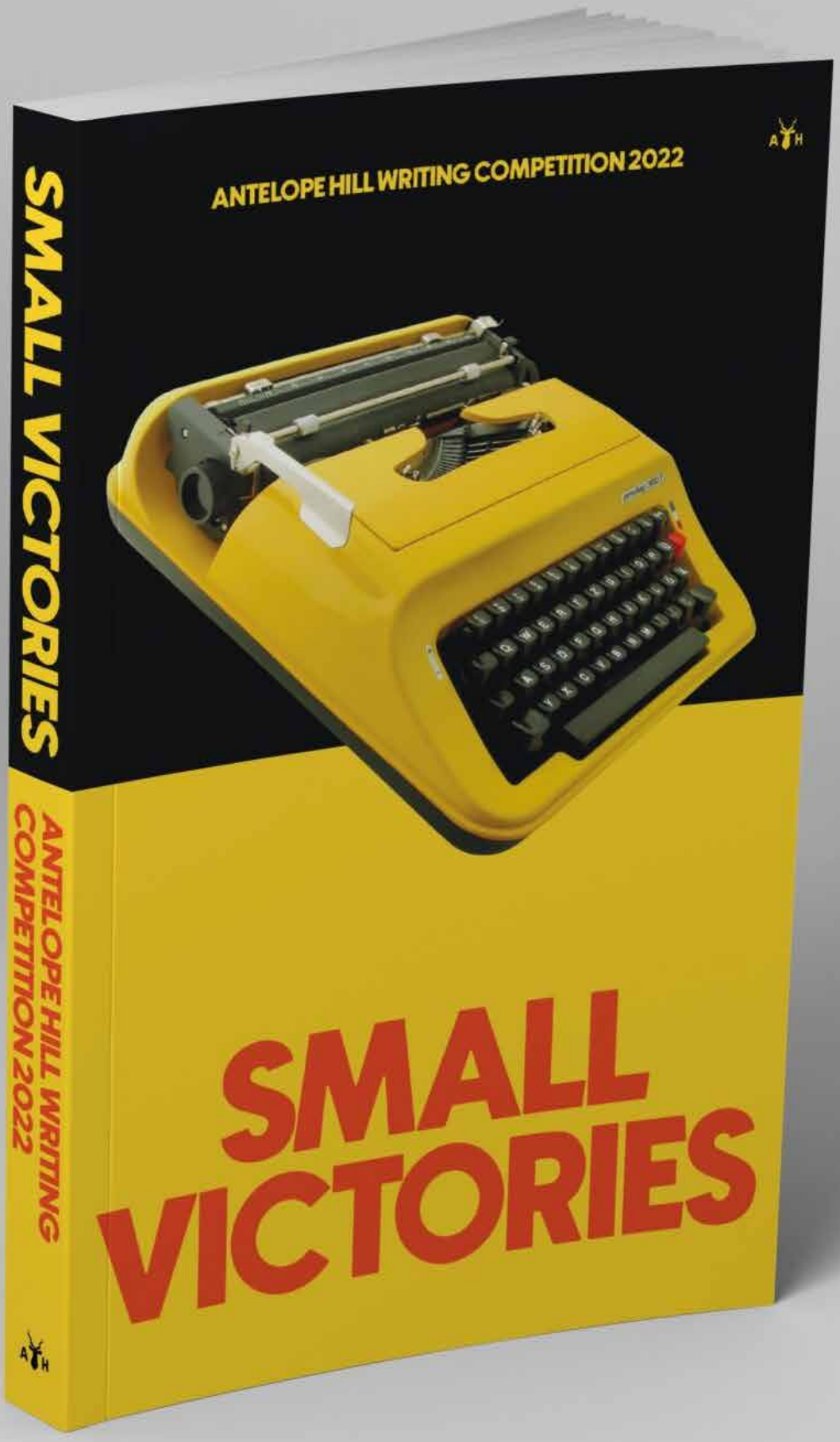

SMALL VICTORIES

What keeps us going when we feel so far from our goal?

Times of uncertainty and confusion weigh on the spirit. In these times it is the simplest and smallest of experiences that give us hope and courage to work for a brighter tomorrow.

The authors contained in this book have shared a little bit of themselves in each response to the "Small Victories" prompt for this year's contest. The writings in this book contain powerful images of simple beauty and humble courage. A handful of these works of prose and poetry have been selected for special honors as winners in respective categories. Many exceptional authors submitted excellent work, and it was a difficult task to restrict the book to only what is contained here.

Antelope Hill Publishing is proud to present the selected works of our second annual writing contest, entitled *Small Victories* sponsored by the White Art Collective, Will2Rise, and Media2Rise. The works contained in these pages are valuable contributions to the body of art and literature worthy of preservation in print for generations to come.

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SMALL VICTORIES

ANTELOPE HILL WRITING COMPETITION 2022

SCOTOPHOBIA

A story by Richard Poe

The scream cut through his slumber like a steel scythe. His wife was screaming. Even in his sleep, fear pierced him through and through. *It's happening*, thought Frank Romain. *The worst has finally happened.*

Every New Yorker has his own idea of what the "worst" might be. It might be an armed intruder standing on your fire escape, silhouetted against your window. It might be the tinkle of broken glass, the groan of a burglar's crowbar, or the crash of a sledgehammer against your steel window grate. These are the sorts of things most men would fear if they heard their wives screaming in the dead of night. But Frank Romain was not like most men. Burglars and murderers held little terror for him. He did not fear creatures of flesh and blood. The things Frank feared were invisible. Some might say imaginary.

Frank's therapist referred to his condition as scotophobia, a morbid fear of darkness. The word came from the Greek root *skotos*, meaning darkness, and *phobos*, meaning fear. When Frank first heard it, he conceded that scotophobia was probably as good a word as any. It was clean and simple, as medical terminology ought to be. But it was not exactly the right word. For, in truth, Frank did not fear the dark. Not the darkness itself. What he feared were certain things which he imagined might be lurking in the dark. And Frank was imagining those things tonight.

As Miranda's scream tore him from sleep, Frank's half-dreaming mind peopled the apartment with an array of ghastly beings. He imagined dead things ripe from the grave shuffling around his bed. He imagined them scraping their rotting fingers over Miranda's skin as she screamed. Yes, this was the worst, Frank decided. The very worst. And it was finally happening. Tonight.

"Uhhhh!" Miranda groaned, her voice filled with loathing and disgust.

"Miranda, what is it?" cried Frank.

He fumbled on the floor for his glasses. Miranda had leapt from the bed, shaking her leg as if it were on fire. "Get it off me! Get it off me!" she cried, grimacing in horror.

In the dim light that filtered in from the bathroom — a light which Frank always left on at night — Frank saw something tumble off Miranda's side of the bed. It was alive. The creature was shiny, reddish-brown, and about two inches long. It hit the wooden floor with an audible click and went scampering off into the shadows.

"Miranda, what's going on?" said Frank. He was fully awake now. His glasses had brought the room into sharp focus. The dream world was receding now, and the real world taking its place. Whatever was happening to Miranda, at least Frank knew that it was not *the worst*. Not tonight, anyway.

Slowly, through the dullness of sleep, Frank figured out what had happened. He recognized the reddish-brown thing scampering across the floor. If life in an East Village tenement had taught him anything, it had taught him to recognize the many varieties of vermin which shared man's urban habitat.

"It was a waterbug," said Miranda, still in shock. "I rolled on top of it. I could feel it squirming under my thigh. Ugh!"

Frank regarded the bug, which had now taken cover beside a pile of books on the floor. It hid in the shadow of one overhanging tome. New Yorkers called these creatures waterbugs, but they were actually giant cockroaches, of the species *Periplaneta Americana*. Urban legend often exaggerated their size to preposterous extremes, but this particular specimen was of normal dimensions, not quite two inches in length. A loose sneaker lay nearby. Frank shooed the bug from its hiding place and slapped it hard with the sneaker. He used a wet paper towel to clean up the mess. It was all very easy and matter-of-fact. But then, quite suddenly, it was over. The crisis had passed. There was nothing left to do. Silence fell like a stone. Deep shadows covered the room. "What now?" Frank asked himself.

The clock on the wall said 2:30 am. Frank groaned aloud. Just his luck! This was the worst time of night to be awake. Miranda would fall asleep quickly, but Frank would not. He would be alone in the dark through that long, desolate hour between three and four in the morning. And he would be afraid. All his life, Frank had a tendency to wake up around this time. It was a curse he could not seem to break. When he studied comparative folklore in graduate school, Frank learned that he was not the first to suffer from this particular curse. Many people through the ages had dreaded the hour between three and four in the morning. In parts of England, they called it the devil's hour. Further east, it was known by a different name.

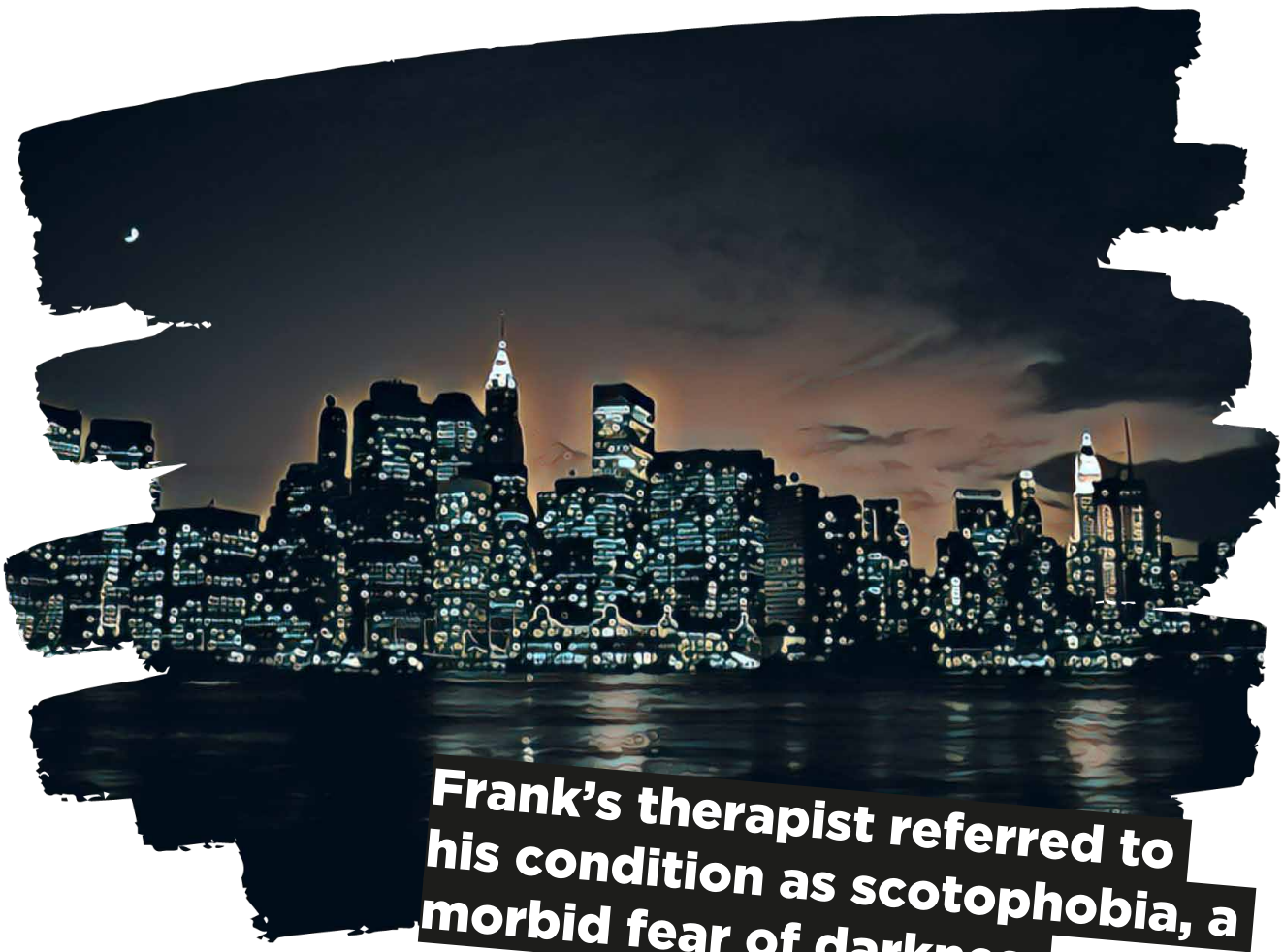
The Russians called it *chas volka*. The Swedes called it *vargtimmen*. Both had the same meaning. It was the hour of the wolf, the time when wolves howl at your door. Every scotophobe knows the meaning of that hour. One of history's more prominent scotophobes, Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman, had explored the topic in his 1968 film, "The Hour of the Wolf." In it, Max von Sydow plays an artist descending into madness. He cannot sleep, for fear of the dark, so every night he keeps a nervous vigil through the wolf hour. He explains to his wife, played by Liv Ullman, that the wolf hour is the time when most people are born and most people die. "Now is when nightmares come to us," he tells her. "And if we are awake, we are afraid."

"Great," said Frank aloud. "That's just great. Here I am wide awake and the wolf hour starts in thirty minutes."

"Oh, please, Frank. Don't start that," said Miranda. "There's no such thing as the wolf hour. You really need to get a grip. You're not Max von Sydow and I'm not Liv Ullman. Please stop talking like that and come back to bed."

That was easy enough for Miranda to say. She did not suffer from scotophobia. She would have no trouble going back to sleep. But Frank knew that many hours of darkness lay ahead. He was quite sure he would sleep no more that night. "I'm going to the store," he announced to Miranda suddenly.

"But Frank, it's 2:30 in the morning. Why do you have to go out now?" Miranda pleaded.



Frank's therapist referred to his condition as scotophobia, a morbid fear of darkness

"We have to kill the waterbugs," said Frank. "If there's one waterbug in here, there's probably more. We have to spray. I'm going to get one of those cans of heavy-duty roach spray."

Miranda frowned. "Okay," she finally said. "But be careful. It's dangerous out there."

II.

It was indeed dangerous, as Miranda said. The particular block of East 13th Street where Frank and Miranda lived was probably one of the more perilous districts of the East Village. Drug dealers filled the sidewalks, day and night. Things got violent sometimes. Now and then, gunfire broke out in the street. But, in Frank's view, these were minor inconveniences. Frank loved this neighborhood. It was the perfect place for a scotophobe.

The streets were always full of people, day and night. Of course, many of those people were drug dealers, crackheads and worse. But at least they were human. They could shoot you, stab you, rob you or beat you, but they couldn't do anything, well, *worse*. Frank loved walking out of his building at 2:30 in the morning, as he was doing tonight, and emerging onto a street that was aboil with activity. His block was a deep canyon of brick walls and fire escapes. On that hot summer night, shadowy figures in sleeveless t-shirts moved in the gloom. Dominican merengues blared tinnily from boomboxes. Vomit and urine steamed from the pavement. On the corner of Avenue A, the 24-hour Korean grocery store glowed like a beacon. "I love New York," thought Frank, with a deep sigh of contentment.

In New York, you were never alone. As long as there were crowds in the street, as long as there were neon-lit bars, fluorescent 24-hour minimarts, subways roaring underground and sirens ululating into the night, then all was normal. Everything was under control. It was different upstate. Frank was born and raised in a place called Donkerkerk, New York, a small town about a hundred miles north, in the Catskill Mountains. There, the half-dozen shops on Main Street closed early. Even the bars shut down at two in the morning, and once the last drunken drivers had vanished from Route 23C, a deadly silence hugged the forest.

Too many times, Frank had found himself driving alone down mountain roads under the awful ebon sky. Too many times, while his father slept off his latest drunk on the living room couch, Frank had lain awake in his bedroom, listening for that tell-tale sound in the woods, that broken twig, that growl from the dog, that odd new shrillness in the cricket's song that might signal *the worst* was on its way, lumbering across the

The original "van life"

yard on misshapen legs. Frank had never seen a ghost or a ghoul. In fact, he did not believe in such things, at least not in the daylight, when there were people around. But things seemed different in the dark. On wintry nights, when the moon gleamed and the naked trees scratched at his window, Frank knew that anything was possible. Anything.

When he was growing up in the Catskills, Frank liked to go with his friends to a place called Lookout Point. On a clear day, you could see four neighboring states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. On certain nights, when conditions were right, you could see a halo of orange light gleaming on the southern horizon. That was the glow from New York City, a hundred miles away. Frank never tired of staring at it. Many times, he vowed to himself that he would live there someday, under that great dome of light. In the city, the lights never went out. Frank knew he would always be safe there. At least, so he imagined.

Eventually, Frank achieved his goal. He was accepted into New York University, and moved to Manhattan. There he earned an undergraduate degree in anthropology, and began work on his Ph.D. in urban archaeology. Life was good in the city. In Manhattan, the tall buildings blocked out the sky, and the city hugged you close like a womb. The lights blazed twenty-four hours a day and the boundary between this world and that other world grew very thick. Frank liked it that way.

III.

Frank returned that night from the Korean minimart with a large blue and silver canister of Raid MAX. Though it was nearly 3 am, his tenement building still quivered with life. Beyond his apartment walls, above, below and all around him, hundreds of fellow tenants lived out their lives like bees in a great hive. Even now, at this hour, many would be eating, drinking, reveling, watching television or perhaps making love. Even now, Frank could hear water rushing through the pipes from his neighbors' showers, sinks and toilets. He could hear merengues wafting faintly from the sidewalk below, and jet planes thundering overhead, as they made their final approaches to Kennedy and LaGuardia airports. All was well on East 13th Street. Or at least so it seemed.

"Frank, why don't you come to bed?" said Miranda. "You can do the spraying tomorrow."

"It'll just take a minute," said Frank. The truth was, Frank was in no hurry to go to bed. Going back to bed meant turning out the lights again. It meant lying alone in the dark, unable to sleep, perhaps for hours. Spraying for cockroaches seemed a lot more appealing. And so Frank went into the kitchen and pulled the spray can from its plastic bag. "Raid MAX Roach and Ant Killer," said the label. "Contains Cylathrin. Kills Fast, Kills Long."

Frank looked up at the cupboards, suspended in a long row over the kitchen. He had seen many roaches creeping down from those cupboards. Perhaps the creatures were hiding on top. Yes, the top of the cupboards seemed like a good place to start. Frank shook the canister of Raid MAX. It felt cool in his hand, like polished gunmetal. Raising his arm aloft, Frank pressed the button and sprayed. A noxious, chemical smell pervaded the kitchen as the mist jetted upward and over the top of the cupboards. The clock on the wall said 2:45 am. Neither Frank nor Miranda were prepared for what happened next.

IV.

At first, Frank thought he was seeing things. He thought his eyes might be out of focus. But it was really happening. A veritable river of insect bodies came pouring over the top of the cupboard. There were small roaches, little more than half an inch in length. But there were also great big waterbugs, two inches long. Some of the waterbugs were larger than normal, Frank noted. Several three-inch specimens landed with sickening thumps on his kitchen counter. Then, a much louder thump drew Frank's attention to the stove. What on earth could that have been? He hardly dared look. When he did, Frank saw a great, shiny-winged *Periplaneta* lying flat on its back on the stove, its yellow legs kicking spasmodically, as thick as the legs of a frozen prawn, and surely as meaty. Frank's heart quivered at the sight of this prodigy, four inches long, if it was a millimeter. Never before had Frank seen a waterbug of that size.

Such monstrous arthropods existed only in tall tales traded with horrified laughter over cappuccino in Second Avenue coffeeshops. They were urban legends, nothing more. Yet the creature on Frank's stove was no legend. It was real. Gooseflesh prickled Frank's skin. A troubling premonition stirred in his mind. But he had no time to ponder it. Things were happening too quickly. Bug after giant bug plunged over the top of Frank's cupboard, writhing and kicking as they struck the counter. Some fell with a bounce on the metal sink. Others plopped into water-filled pots and pans, where they floated dead amid strands of broken spaghetti.

"Frank, what on earth is that sound?" said Miranda. From the living room, she could hear the bug bodies click as they fell.

"You really don't want to

know," Frank replied.

It was all over in about five minutes. The bugs were dead. A poisonous mist filled the apartment. Miranda rose from her futon in the living room to see the damage. Together, she and Frank surveyed the corpse-strewn battlefield that had once been their kitchen. It would be a long time before Frank felt quite comfortable eating food from those pans again.

"I can't believe there were so many of them," Miranda said at last, her voice filled with wonder. "And so big."

"Well, they're dead now," said Frank. "Now we can sleep in peace." Alas, Frank could not have been more mistaken.

V.

They cleaned up the roach bodies on the sink and counter. But now Frank had to climb on a chair to see what lay atop the cupboards.

"Be careful," said Miranda, as Frank clambered unsteadily onto the chair. His eyes burned from the roach spray. Frank blinked twice and beheld a veritable blanket of dead roaches, stacked half an inch deep atop the cupboard. With a paper towel, he began gingerly grabbing up handfuls of them, careful not to squeeze too hard, lest he hear or feel the grisly crunch of their exoskeletons. Frank was a little squeamish when it came to bugs, if truth be told.

"What do you see up there?" asked Miranda. "Are they all dead?"

"They're dead all right," said Frank, discharging his first load of roach bodies into the kitchen trash. "But I think our problems have just begun."

"What do you mean?"

"There's a big hole in the wall. I can just see the top of it from here, but I think there's more behind the cupboards. It's a huge hole. I think that's where the roaches are coming from."

"Oh my God," said Miranda. "Anything could come through there. There might be rats."

"It doesn't look like a rathole," said Frank. "It's more like the wall has rotted through."

"What are you doing?" said Miranda.

Still standing on the chair, Frank was leaning forward over the top of the cupboard, trying to get a closer look at the hole. But he leaned too heavily. The cabinet groaned beneath him. Suddenly, the whole row of cupboards ripped free from the wall. Frank barely had time to jump before the whole unit fell with a mighty crash over the counter and sink, shattering dishes and drinking glasses. The room filled with a fine gypsum mist from the broken wallboard.

"Frank!" Miranda screamed. "Are you all right?" She rushed to his side, grabbing his face in her hands and fussing over him. From below, the downstairs neighbors pounded angrily on their ceiling. "Cut out that friggin' racket!" called one muffled voice.

Frank sat on the kitchen floor, blinking in shock. His glasses had flown across the room. White dust clung to his face and hair.

"Yeah, I'm all right," he said, fumbling for his glasses. Frank regarded what had once been their kitchen wall. The cupboard, when it fell, had ripped out a gaping hole at least four feet wide. Through it, Frank could see the wooden wall studs within.

"Oh, look at our wall!" Miranda moaned. "It must have been completely rotted through. We've got to call the landlord. They have to fix this tomorrow. Frank, where are you going?"

Frank had disappeared into his office, at the far end of their railroad flat. He emerged, ready for action, with a flashlight in hand. His glasses were now secured to his head with a nylon strap. "I don't want my glasses falling off again," he explained.

The plaster dust was just beginning to settle. Frank's flashlight beam carved a weird corridor of phosphorescent mist through the air. Carefully, he and Miranda lowered the cupboard to the floor, exposing the hole completely.

"Nice, huh?" Frank remarked. "That hole must have been hidden behind that cabinet since we moved in here. No wonder this place is infested. Here, give me a hand."

With Miranda's help, Frank pulled the refrigerator away from the wall, exposing more of the hole. It was much larger than they had thought. Frank poked his head through and looked inside. For a long time, he peered into the depths of his kitchen wall, darting the flashlight beam here and there, his brow wrinkled in puzzlement. "Now that's the damnedest thing," he finally said.

"What do you see?" asked Miranda.

Frank withdrew from the hole. For a long time, he stood silently, biting his lip and tapping the flashlight thoughtfully against his palm.

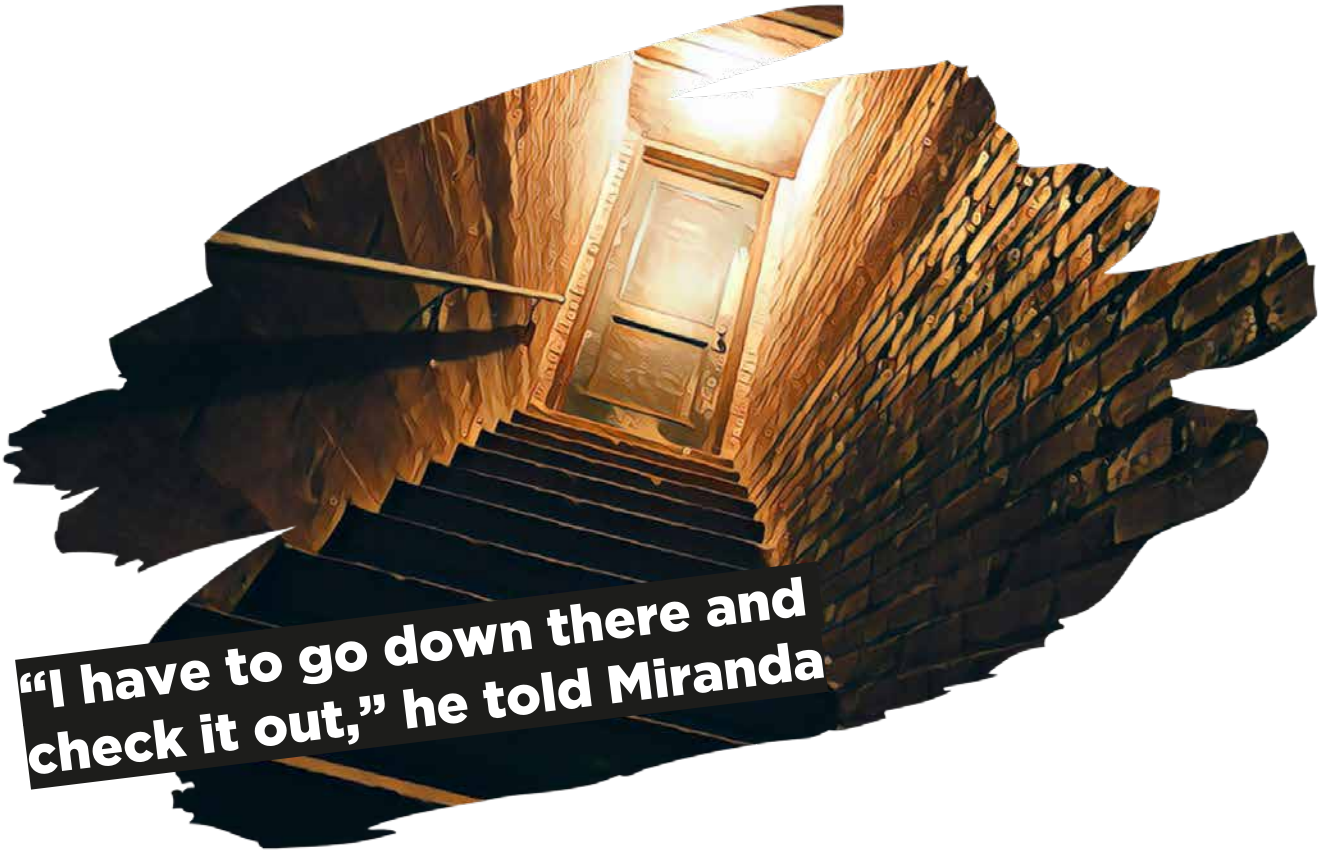
"Frank, what is it? Will you talk to me? You're getting me scared."

"I don't see how it's possible," he finally said. "The wall just isn't thick enough. Unless, of course, it gets thicker on the floors below us."

"What are you talking about? Thick enough for what? What did you see in there?"

"Take a look yourself."

Miranda grabbed the flashlight and leaned into the hole. At first, she could not comprehend what confronted her. Just inside the hole, the wall appeared to be of normal thickness, about six inches wide. But when Miranda looked down, toward the floor, she saw that the space widened into a stairway, a red-brick, spiral staircase leading down into the



"I have to go down there and check it out," he told Miranda

gloom below. Miranda gulped and withdrew her head.

"There's a staircase in there," she said quietly.

"It looks to me like there's got to be a good six feet of clearance to make room for that staircase," said Frank. "The floors below us must have walls that are seven feet thick, at least."

"How can that be?" said Miranda.

Frank shrugged. "These are old buildings. Maybe they used to put service staircases in the walls to sort of, you know, get access to the plumbing. Or something." But even as he spoke, Frank knew he was talking nonsense. As a doctoral candidate in urban archaeology, Frank was intimately familiar with the architecture of nineteenth-century tenements on the Lower East Side. No stairways had ever been found in the walls of these buildings.

Clearly this was no ordinary staircase. It was a secret passage, built for some unknown purpose, more than a hundred years ago, by people long dead. Nothing in Frank's academic training had prepared him for such a discovery. He could not imagine what he might find at the bottom of those stairs. But he was determined to find out.

VI.

"I have to go down there and check it out," he told Miranda.

"You can't possibly be serious," she said. "How can you even think of going down that hole?"

Frank sighed. How could he explain his reasons to Miranda? He could, of course, pretend that his interest was purely professional. Frank was an archaeologist, after all. At least he *would* be an archaeologist, once he finished defending his doctoral dissertation next year. And this was a potentially significant find. After countless summers spent sifting damp earth in upstate New York for such meager rewards as broken arrowheads and tiny swaths of rotted Mohican basketry, here at last was something exciting — an actual secret passageway in the heart of Manhattan's East Village. A discovery like this could potentially find its way into a National Geographic television special. At the very least, it could get Frank a write-up in *Urban Archaeology Review*.

Frank had to admit, however, that professional ambition was not his driving motivation. His real reason was more primitive. It was the same reason that a child peers under the bed and checks the closet before retiring. Frank didn't like the idea of turning out the lights and going back to bed with that mysterious hole yawning in his kitchen. If he could just explore the passage a little, touch it, feel it, smell it, and see with his own eyes that no goblins crouched in its depths, Frank would feel a whole lot better about closing his eyes tonight.

"I should at least check the staircase to see if there are more bugs down there," Frank argued feebly, inventing excuses as he went. "If I don't spray now, they might come out of the hole while we're sleeping, and swarm all over the house."

Miranda shot him a skeptical look. "Okay," she finally said. "But wait for me to get dressed. If you're going down there, I'm coming with you."

VII.

They crept carefully down the dank, brick-lined stairwell, the last fading light from their kitchen receding above them. Frank led the way, brandishing his flashlight and the canister of Raid MAX. Now and then, he let loose a gust of spray when he spied a cockroach.

"You should save the spray," said Miranda. "Don't waste it on every little bug you see." *Because*, her mind finished silently, *you never know what we might find down below.*

The staircase seemed to spiral downward forever. The air was close and damp, the bricks mossy with age, and the staircase so narrow, their shoulders squeezed against the sides. After a very long time, Frank announced that he thought they had reached ground level. They had descended six floors. Frank tapped his flashlight against the bricks.

"This should be the Pinnellis' kitchen behind this wall," he said. "The basement is right below us."

He shined his flashlight down the stairwell, but it revealed only the same endless passageway, spiralling downward into infinity. Frank could discern no opening into the cellar. "Let's go," he said.

Soon they had descended to a point that must have been at least ten feet below the basement. But they had still found no opening. The staircase continued ever downward. Frank and Miranda stopped and looked at each other in the pale glow from the flashlight.

"I'm starting to get claustrophobic," Miranda admitted calmly.

"Me too," said Frank, with a nervous glance upward.

"If this staircase doesn't open out into something soon," Miranda suggested, "we go back up. Okay?" "Fair enough," said Frank.

They resumed their descent. Both of their faces were now covered with a fine sheen of sweat. The air in the tiny passage had grown thick.

"Have you noticed something about the bricks?" Frank said.

"What about them?"

"They're different. Ever since we dropped below the basement. Above that level, they're the same bricks as the rest of the building. But now they're smaller and yellowish in color." With his finger, Frank wiped the dirt and grease from one brick. "Look here. Underneath all the crud, there's a sheen or glaze. These are 17th-century bricks. They have to date from the Dutch colonial period, no later than 1664." Frank's voice grew quiet with awe. "It's amazing," he said. "No one knows about this except us. It's a significant find."

"But Frank, why would the Dutch colonists build a spiral staircase going straight down into the ground?" asked Miranda.

"I guess we'll find that out at the bottom," Frank replied. They continued down the stairs.

"Uh, Frank," said Miranda, after a few minutes. "Isn't it about that time?"

"What time?"

"To start back up?"

Frank didn't seem to hear her. He was listening intently to something far below.

VIII.

"It sounds like water," said Frank. "Running water. Could be an underground stream. Or maybe a water main. It's not far."

Miranda sighed and followed. As they descended, the sound of rushing water grew closer. Suddenly, they reached the bottom of the staircase. The narrow stairwell opened out into a wide chamber. On this level, the 17th-century bricks gave way to an altogether different type of stone. Above and around them, Frank's flashlight revealed a great hall formed of limestone megaliths. The stones were gigantic, many as big as cars, and some even bigger.

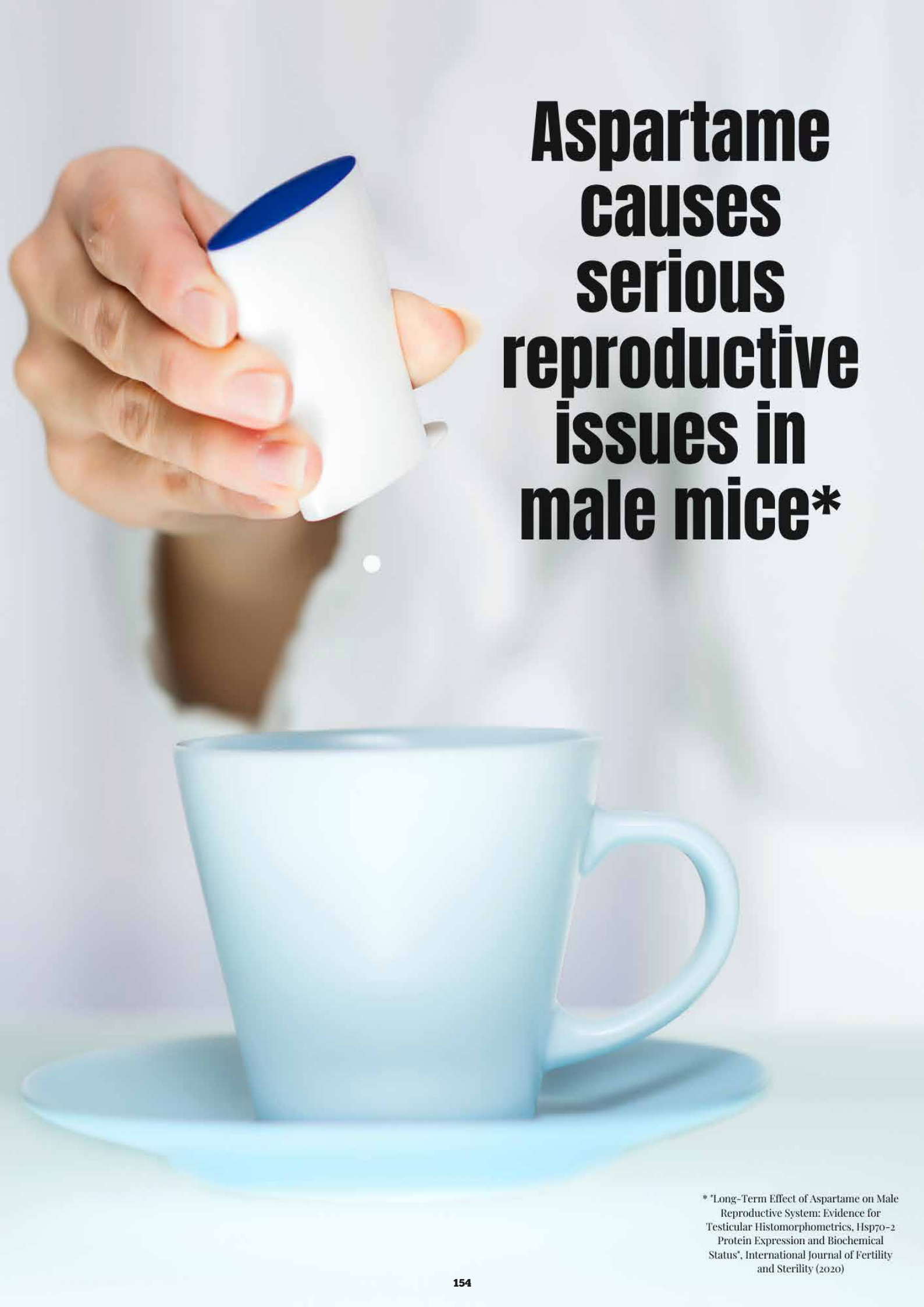
"Frank, what is this?" asked Miranda, a small tremor in her voice.

Frank didn't answer at first. His mind had not yet processed what he was seeing. The huge size of these stones and the massive, post-and-lintel construction was unlike anything he had expected to find. Neither the Dutch colonists nor the Algonquin Indians had built anything like this. The great stone chamber reminded Frank of megalithic structures peculiar to certain prehistoric sites in Europe and South America.

Stonehenge came to mind, or Tiahuanaco in Bolivia. But this was not Bolivia. This was New York. These ruins were completely out of place here. They did not belong in Manhattan. *Can it be?* Frank mused silently. *A lost civilization? Right here in the East Village?*

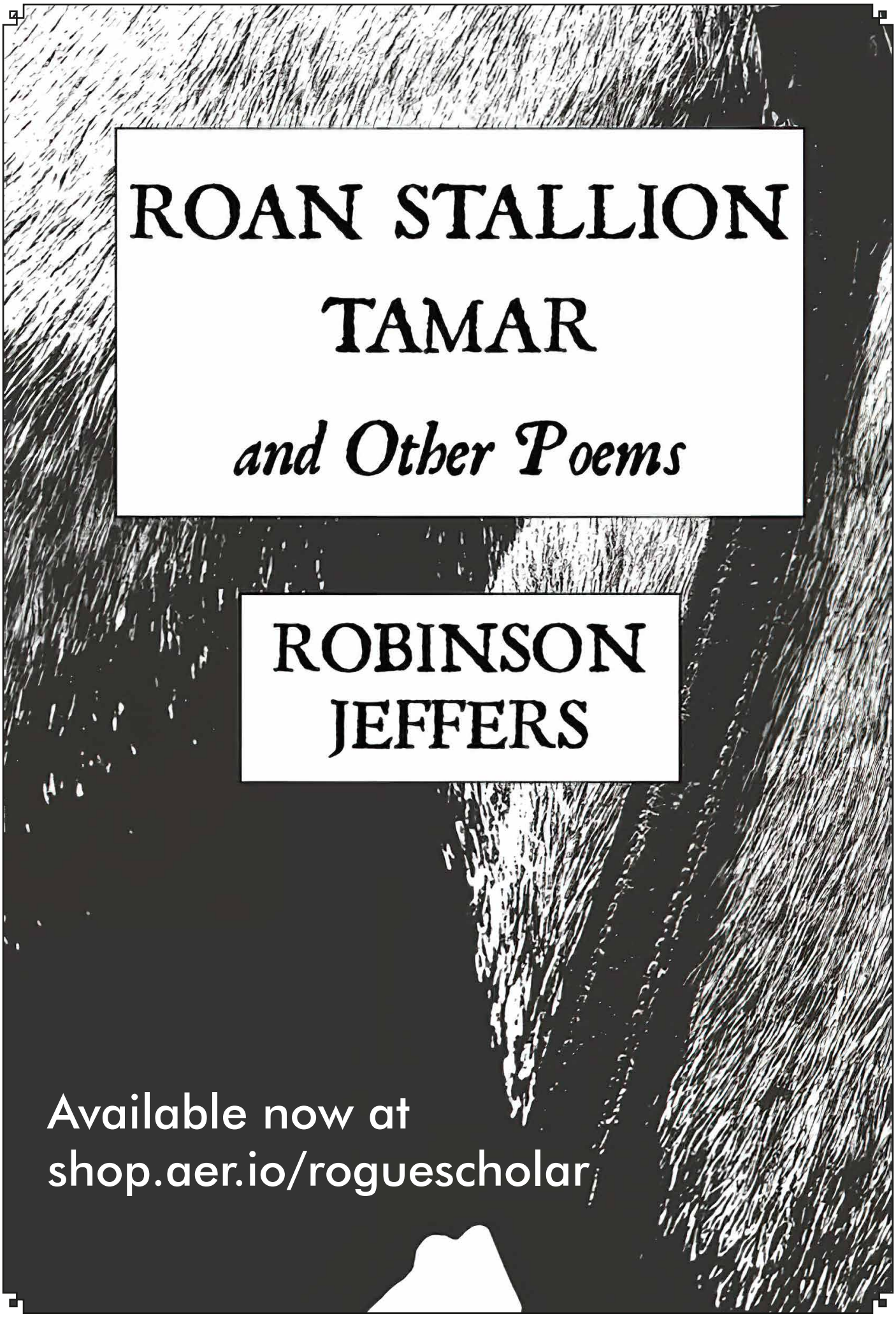
"Frank, talk to me!" said Miranda. "What is this? Who built these things?"

"I have no idea," Frank replied. And indeed he did not. Conventional archaeology provided no clue as to who might have built such structures. Urban legend, however, offered a wealth of possibilities. New York's rumor mills had long dwelt upon the possibility of secret tunnels and ancient catacombs buried beneath the city. No one had ever seen these legendary stoneworks, yet rumors of their existence proliferated. Every occult bookstore, crystal therapy clinic and vegetarian juice bar in Manhattan abounded with theosophists, druidists, UFOlogists, psychedelicists and other New Age sectarians, eager to add their own peculiar embellishments to the yarn. Some attributed the mysterious stoneworks to Atlanteans; others credited space travelers from the Pleiades star cluster; seafaring Druids from ancient Ireland; or the lost fleet of the Knights Tem-



Aspartame causes serious reproductive issues in male mice*

* "Long-Term Effect of Aspartame on Male Reproductive System: Evidence for Testicular Histomorphometrics, Hsp70-2 Protein Expression and Biochemical Status", International Journal of Fertility and Sterility (2020)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plar. Frank made it his business to collect such stories, as he collected all urban legends, no matter how odd or improbable. But this was no legend. This limestone chamber where he and Miranda now stood was real. Like the four-inch cockroaches lying dead in his kitchen, this megalithic chamber was an urban legend come to life. It was a thing that should not exist, yet existed nonetheless.

"Frank, do you think the Indians could have built this?" asked Miranda.

Frank frowned. "It doesn't seem likely," he mused. "The Algonquins erected cairns and standing stones for religious purposes, but, well, nothing like this. Look at the size of these stones. Some of these must weigh a hundred tons or more. Where did they quarry this limestone? And how did they transport the stones? This was a huge undertaking. There's nothing else like this in North America."

"Frank, shine your flashlight over here," cried Miranda. She pointed to one of the limestone blocks forming the wall of the chamber. The stone was slimy and dank. Beneath the grime, Frank saw pictographs. A figure of a large, coiled serpent wound its way across the megalith. Beneath the snake, Frank saw other symbols. They had the appearance of writing, but were unlike any script Frank had ever seen. The characters were jagged and keen, like shards of broken glass. They looked as if some madman had struck them from the rock in a fit of rage. It occurred to Frank that something was not quite right with these letters, but he couldn't put his finger on it. Disturbing images filled his mind. A wave of nausea unsettled Frank's stomach.

"Is that writing?" asked Miranda.

Frank swallowed hard and pushed the troubling thoughts away. "Yes, it does look like writing," he said. "But I've never seen this script. It's completely unknown." Frank pulled his mind back from the abyss. He reminded himself that he was a scientist. He must keep a level head. Few archaeologists ever got a break like this. It was important to stay focused. This was beyond anything Frank could have hoped to find when he started down that staircase. It was the find of a lifetime, a new civilization. This discovery would make him famous, Frank realized. The arteries in his neck throbbed in excitement. Frank rocked his flashlight back and forth across the giant stone archway before them. His flashlight revealed yet another chamber in the gloom beyond, a much larger chamber, by the look of it. "Let's check it out," said Frank.

He proceeded ahead, but Miranda hung back, afraid. "Frank, it's so dark in there. And we're getting too far from the staircase. Please, let's go back. This isn't safe. What if we get hurt or we can't find our way back? No one even knows we're down here. We should come back later, when we have help."

Frank wavered for a moment. On one level, he knew that Miranda was right. But it was too late to turn back now. Frank knew that the moment this find was reported, the tenured professors would move in, hogging all the glory and grant money for themselves. This was Frank's one chance to play the explorer, perhaps the only chance he'd ever get.

"Just a little farther," he told Miranda. "I just want to see what's beyond that doorway. We'll check it out, then we'll turn back. Okay?" Miranda nodded reluctantly and followed Frank through the massive archway into the blackness beyond.

IX.

The flashlight beam pierced the darkness. Wherever it shone, it caught a mist glistening in the air. The floor, Frank could see, was covered with puddles and slime. When he trained his flashlight on the ceiling, Frank saw long white stalactites which must have taken centuries to form. The sound of running water echoed through the chamber. It seemed to come from a long way off, from somewhere beyond the walls.

"Give me your hand," said Frank.

Cautiously, they stepped through the stagnant, limey puddles. Water seeped through their sneakers, oily and cold. The chamber was so immense that Frank could not find the other end of it with his flashlight. He saw only square limestone columns spaced at wide and regular intervals, stretching outward toward infinity.

"Frank, this floor isn't solid," Miranda said suddenly. Frank's flashlight beam darted downward. Too late, he saw that the ancient limestone was as pockmarked as an old Swiss cheese. Countless centuries of dripping water had eaten holes through it. Even the solid parts yielded like styrofoam beneath their feet.

"Miranda, I think we'd better go baaaa...."

Frank never finished his sentence. With a roar like thunder, the floor gave way beneath them. Flashlight and bug spray flew from Frank's hand. His glasses bounced wildly over his face, dangling from their nylon strap. For one mad second, only the rush of air past their faces and the sound of their own screaming told Frank and Miranda that they were still alive, as they tumbled headlong into the unfathomable gloom below.

THE TERROR CONTINUES ON PAGE 326

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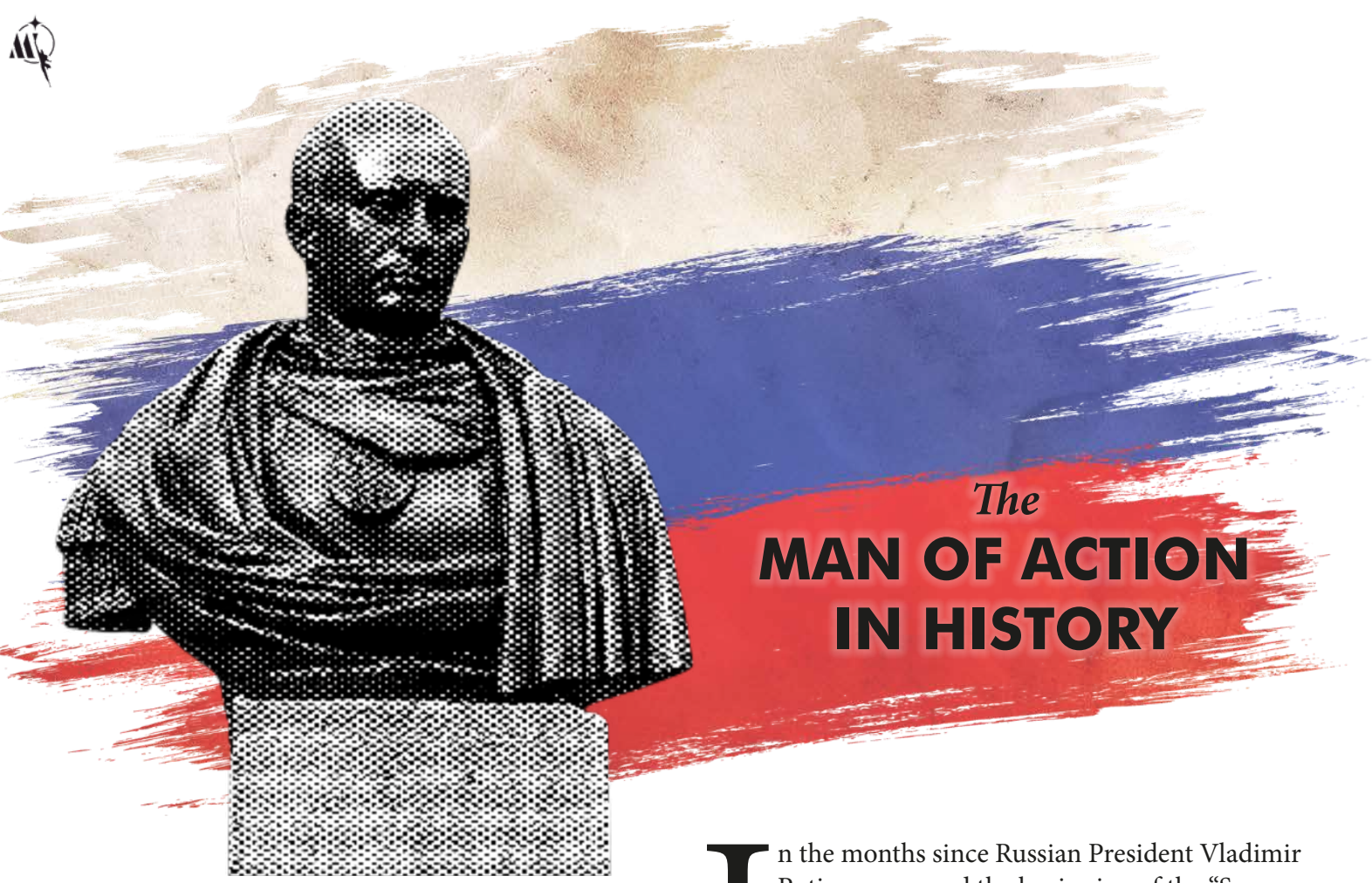


The MAN OF ACTION IN HISTORY

Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has raised the spectre of a figure long thought banished from the Western world — the Great Man. But what does it mean to be a Great Man? And what can we learn from the careers of men who exemplify this ideal? BIG SERGE (@witte_sergei) provides us with some answers...

In the months since Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of the "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine, countless words – mostly negative – have been spilled across every node of the western world's information superstructure. This frantic and relentless stream of indignant bloviations recalls the apocryphal warning – at times attributed to both Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain – that it is unwise to upset people who buy ink by the barrel. One thing which stands out as a common theme of this new genre of Ukrainian agitprop is the widespread and openly admitted confusion: despite the Russian government openly explaining their motivations (at great length, in Putin's case) and despite a variety of western geopolitical thinkers who warned of precisely the current scenario, most of the contemporary thinking caste simply cannot wrap their heads around what is happening.

I suspect that the reason for this, and one of the reasons why Putin is so particularly infuriating to the intelligentsia, is that he believes in the primacy of action in politics, and indeed in life. Contemporary political science and geopolitics is deeply dismissive of agency and action, instead preferring to view the world through a framework wherein events flow deterministically from some pre-existing verdict.

Such thinking is ubiquitous, whether explicitly stated in Fukuyama "End of History" style anti-geopolitics, or implicitly baked into the post-Cold War American foreign policy, which has haphazardly

smashed up states around the globe under the presumption that all societies will, by some immutable law of neoliberal victory, develop into "liberal democracies" and join the west in the post-historical stasis of Elysium – provided of course that the despotic forces impeding this process are removed by the intelligence agencies, air strikes, or "moderate rebels on the ground". This bias against action as an axis of existence is also deeply laced into domestic life in the west, which is dominated by the metastatic bureaucracies, human resource apparatuses, and social credit rules which sclerotize society and prohibit any movement except that which tracks the predetermined arc of history. There is no agency in the longhouse.

Even where the existence of geopolitics as such is acknowledged, and history is granted to be still ongoing (against our better sensibilities), it is still frequently viewed as deterministic. The pop Geopolitical thinker Peter Zeihan, for example, while dazzling with his knowledge of such minutiae as shipping routes, bauxite deposits, and river navigability, tends to view all of history as essentially predetermined by geography, and to a lesser extent demographics. When the inevitable victory of grey goo neoliberal technocracy is added to such theories, one gets a map of the world where there simply is no room for action or initiative to alter the course of events. Putin is viewed not so much as a world-historical actor as a glitch in the program or a wrench in the gears; he does not alter history, but only impedes its inevitable course.

In short, contemporary thinking has rejected the notion of the Great Man – the man of action, who through his own skill and force of will imposes his imprint on history. Not only is there no room for a Great Man to arise today, there is even a broad denial of the existence of Great Men in the past. History instead tends to focus on broad political and social factors, dismissing the Great Man as merely a contingent personification of societal forces.

It was not ever thus.

For most of human history, action was revered as the prime axis of existence, and people instinctively recognized and revered the man of action. Most importantly, action was accepted as having the power to impose its own verdict on the world. Victory was intrinsically self-legitimizing. Vladimir Putin understands this; for all the phantasmagorical predictions of a palace coup or a general uprising by the Russian people, Putin understands that such fates are rarely reserved for great victors. He shows little interest in participating in the information war (those armies of Russian bots and misinformation spreaders are nowhere to be found). The information war is downstream of the real war.

Putin is hardly the first man to shoulder both the burden and the promise of bold, world historical action, and to do so with intense self-awareness. This is a long and storied tradition, which in many ways is the history of the world itself, and in the west it is personified early on with the iconic Great Man, whose name remained synonymous with imperial power and majesty two millennia after his death: Gaius Julius Caesar.

At age 33, Caesar is said to have wept before a statue of Alexander the Great. At the time, Caesar was a quaestor – a mid-level administrator – in Roman Hispania, and his tears were prompted by the sudden recognition, in the presence of mighty Alexander's image, that he had done nothing yet that would carry his name down through the ages. This self-awareness and the desire to be a world historical figure was characteristic of Caesar from an early age: in his early 20's, he was kidnapped and held ransom by pirates and convinced them to raise their ransom demands, feeling that their initial ask was insultingly low and made him seem unimportant. But in any case, when he wept in front of Alexander, he need not have fretted – greatness loomed.

By 59 BC, Caesar – now 41 years old – had crashed his way through a successful, but chaotic, political breakout. He successfully secured a term as one of the Republic's two consuls – the highest elected office in Rome – but his year in office was marked with irregularities, which included an abortive attempt to redistribute lands to the poor by force of arms, ensuing clashes with Roman elites, and (the climax) placing his counterpart consul under de facto house arrest. The political campaigning to secure the consulship (which included ostentatious public displays of wealth and generosity along with back alley bribes) also left Caesar deeply in debt. So, he had enjoyed a year at the pinnacle of Roman politics, but he was now both deep in debt and facing potential prosecution for the anomalies of his consulship. To evade both of these problems, Caesar immediately pivoted from the consulship to a governorship in the Roman provinces in southern Gaul.

In 59 BC, most of Gaul – the lands which today make up France, Luxemburg, Belgium, and parts of western contemporary Germany – was outside of Roman authority. Rome controlled two provinces along the southern coast (in fact, the French region today known as Provence derives its name from being the first Roman province) but virtually everything north of the Tarn river was out of

bounds. This was the domain of wild, free, and militarily capable Celtic tribes – people invariably described by the Romans, with no small measure of admiration, as tall, muscular, and powerful. Of course, a sophisticated ethnographer may quibble with the distinction between "Celts" and "Gauls", and furthermore between the many Gallic tribes at play, from the Averni, to the Eburones, to the Belgae, from whom we get the name of Belgium – though the difference between modern Belgian

Eurocrats and these warlike progenitors could not be more stark. What is important is that when we speak of Gauls, we understand what we mean. The image is familiar to us: a tall, muscular warrior with red or blonde hair and a serious moustache, likely wearing tartan trousers without a shirt, swirling blue tattoo work across his torso, charging with a berserker's rage.

These were the people whom Caesar set out to conquer in 58 BC. This was a shrewd move in the context of Roman political logic; conquest could generate wealth, through the direct looting of the defeated party's wealth, through the acquisition of new lands, and the selling of captives as slaves – a universally accepted practice in ancient warfare. War could thus allow Caesar to repay his enormous debts – but furthermore, so long as Caesar remained the governor of Gaul, he was immune to prosecution and remained safely at arm's length from his aristocratic rivals in Rome. There were therefore valid political reasons for Caesar to wage a war of conquest in Gaul. But there were other, perhaps more primal factors at play. Gauls had raided Roman territory more than once, defeated

Roman armies, and even sacked Rome – this was hardly a defenceless territory for Rome to steamroll. These were fierce people of whom the Roman public was rightfully wary – viewed with a mixture of exotic fascination and outright fear. Conquering a feared and poorly understood adversary meant glory. It meant the acclamation, admiration, and gratitude of the Roman people. It meant being worthy to stand in the pretence of Alexander without weeping tears of shame. And so, Caesar rolled what Otto von Bismarck called the "iron dice." He chose to erase his debts and political vulnerabilities with bold action. He chose to become a Great Man.

Caesar's campaigns in Gaul are among the most remarkable military achievements of the ancient world – surpassed in scope, perhaps, by Alexander's surgical destruction of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, but more impressive in some ways, given the multi-faceted nature of the wars. Caesar's efforts would include a variety of set piece battles, including many in which Caesar's pool of legions – usually no more than 30 to 40 thousand men – were outnumbered, as well as sieges, counterinsurgency warfare, a manhunt or two, ambitious engineering projects (including bridging the Rhine and crossing the English Channel) and responding to dangerous military initiatives taken by the Gauls themselves, including large scale ambushes.

In all of this, Caesar displayed great military dexterity and personal bravery. He frequently made great gambles, by marching his legions far ahead of their baggage trains, trusting the field engineering skills of the Roman army to overcome problems like besieging fortified settlements and crossing rivers in an improvised manner. Much of the territory that he probed was largely unknown and unmapped for the Romans, and they relied on enticing (or intimidating) some of the smaller, weaker tribes into providing information and food. The early tone of the campaign was characterized by a fabricated, but nevertheless pointed interaction between Caesar and a legion commander: the Legate expressed his concern that the army was lost, to which Caesar simply quipped: "We are not lost. We are in Gaul."

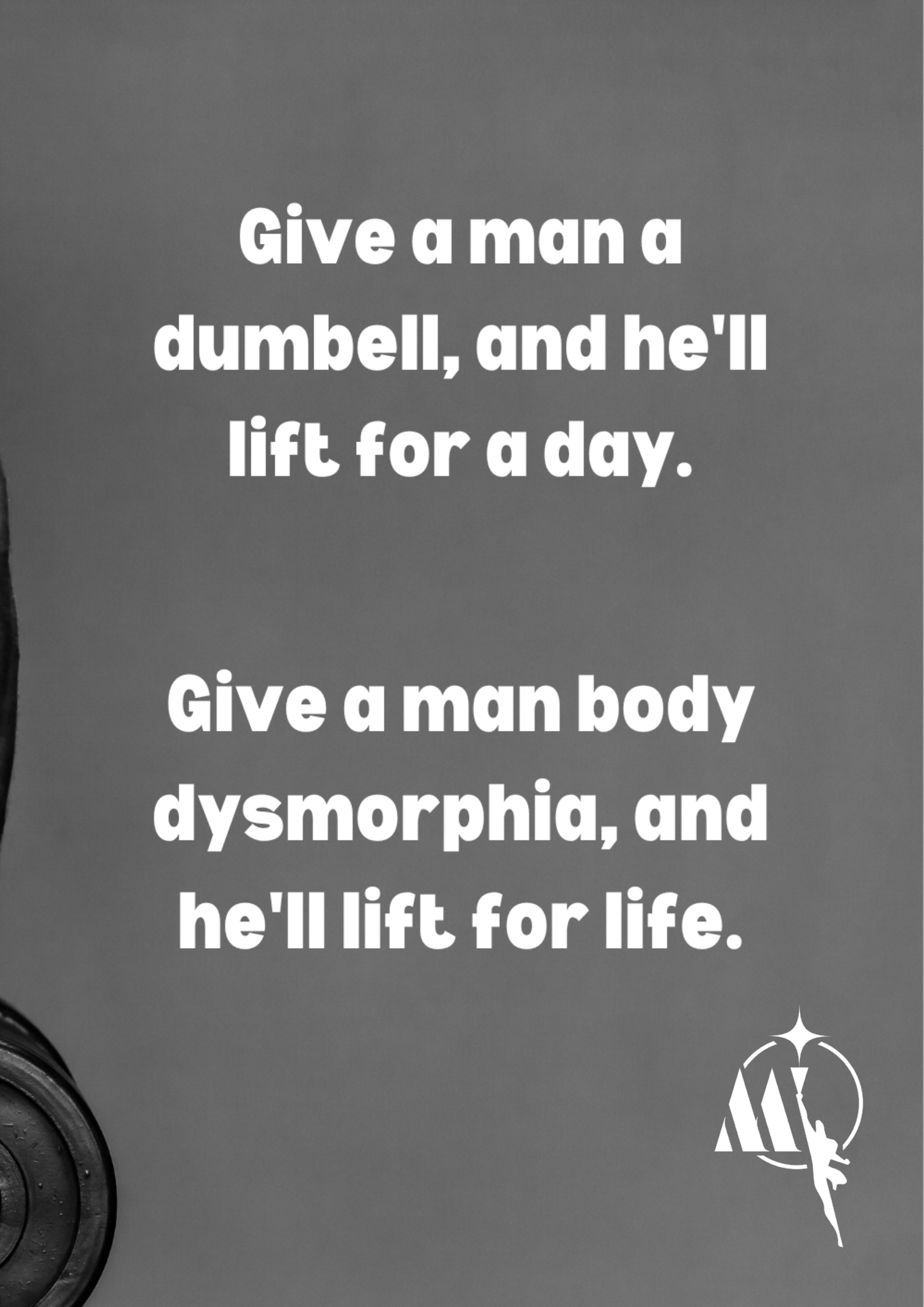
Caesar's campaigns in Gaul lasted for nearly eight years, and came to a head in 52 BC, when Roman successes finally brough existential Gallic fears to a tipping point. The disparate tribes had attempted a disjointed approach to Rome's presence. Some tried conciliation and cooperation, while others fought and mostly lost, and all the while they fought amongst

Mark Anthony's Funeral Oration over the Corpse of Julius Caesar, Robert Seuffert (1906); below: Napoleon Crossing the Alps, Jacques-Louis David (1801)

Caesar's campaigns in Gaul are among the most remarkable military achievements of the ancient world

themselves. However, in 53, Caesar initiated the process of turning Gaul into a Roman province – a development that meant not just Roman military presence, but the promise of eternal Roman civil administration and taxation. This forced a belated, but still dangerous coalition to form among the Gauls, under the leadership of the dynamic Averni King, Vercingetorix. He launched a guerrilla war, raiding Roman supply bases, foraging parties, and baggage trains, and denying Caesar a set piece battle.

The culmination of the Vercingetorix revolt was the famous Battle of Alesia, in which Caesar chased the Gallic leader into the fortified hilltop town of Alesia and trapped him inside by building a full ring of fortifications. The Gauls, however, intended Alesia to be a trap – an enormous relief army was enroute. In one of the most famous feats of battlefield engineering, Caesar's forces then built a second, fully functional fortification ring facing outward – complete with watchtowers, trenches, a moat, and booby traps. The Romans then fought the battle from the space between the walls, repulsing both breakout attempts from the Gauls in the town, and assaults by the Gallic relief force outside. Gauls inside and out broke on Caesar's fortifications, and the relief army dissi-


Give a man a dumbell, and he'll lift for a day.
Give a man body dysmorphia, and he'll lift for life.

pated. Vercingetorix surrendered and was shipped off to Rome, eventually to be paraded through the city and executed.

Caesar conquered Gaul in the name of Rome, but he did so entirely on his own initiative. There was no formal casus belli. Caesar's eight years of war in Gaul long outstripped the original term of his governorship, and he was constantly at pains both to win victories and to elucidate reasons to continue the campaign. There was far more than Rome's geopolitical preeminence at play – Caesar's own fate was being gambled on the battlefield, both in a literal and a political sense. Defeat, or even a stalling of the campaign would have exposed Caesar to the risk of being recalled by the Senate, facing prosecution or exile.

In the end, Caesar was forced to fight – and win – a civil war to secure his political primacy, but he was able to do so successfully because his achievements had won him the personal loyalty of his legions. In this case, as in Gaul, Caesar lived or died on the basis of action, risk-taking, and personal initiative. When he famously crossed the Rubicon with a legion – the symbolic challenge that sparked the civil war – he is said to have remarked, simply, "the die is cast." He accepted that the verdict of history would be decided on the plane of action and being, rather than the political machinations in the forum. If this meant defeat and death, so be it.

Caesar remains one of the most titanic figures in world history, and his achievements and infamy were the products of his own personal dynamism and initiative. Furthermore, he behaved this way in a self-aware and intentional manner – he was a Great Man who was at all times fully cognizant of the fact. In this way, he set the mold for men of action throughout the history of the common era, many of whom would themselves consciously think of themselves in reference to Caesar.

Napoleon would eventually begin to style himself in Caesarian terms, and like his ancient role model, his astonishing life was predicated on victory and forceful agency. It is common to see Napoleon's own person minimized against the larger sociopolitical events occurring at the time. No doubt, these factors are crucial. Napoleon did not overthrow the Bourbons; the French Monarchy was undone because they ran out of colonies and farmland at the same time (a story for another time, perhaps). Certainly, Napoleon benefited from being born into the perfect social strata: high enough to become an officer in the Bourbon army, but not so aristocratic as to be purged by the revolution. Yet no serious study of the man can conclude that he was anything but a singularly talented figure. Every contemporary recognized him as a Great Man: his admirers, his enemies, and not in the least Napoleon himself.

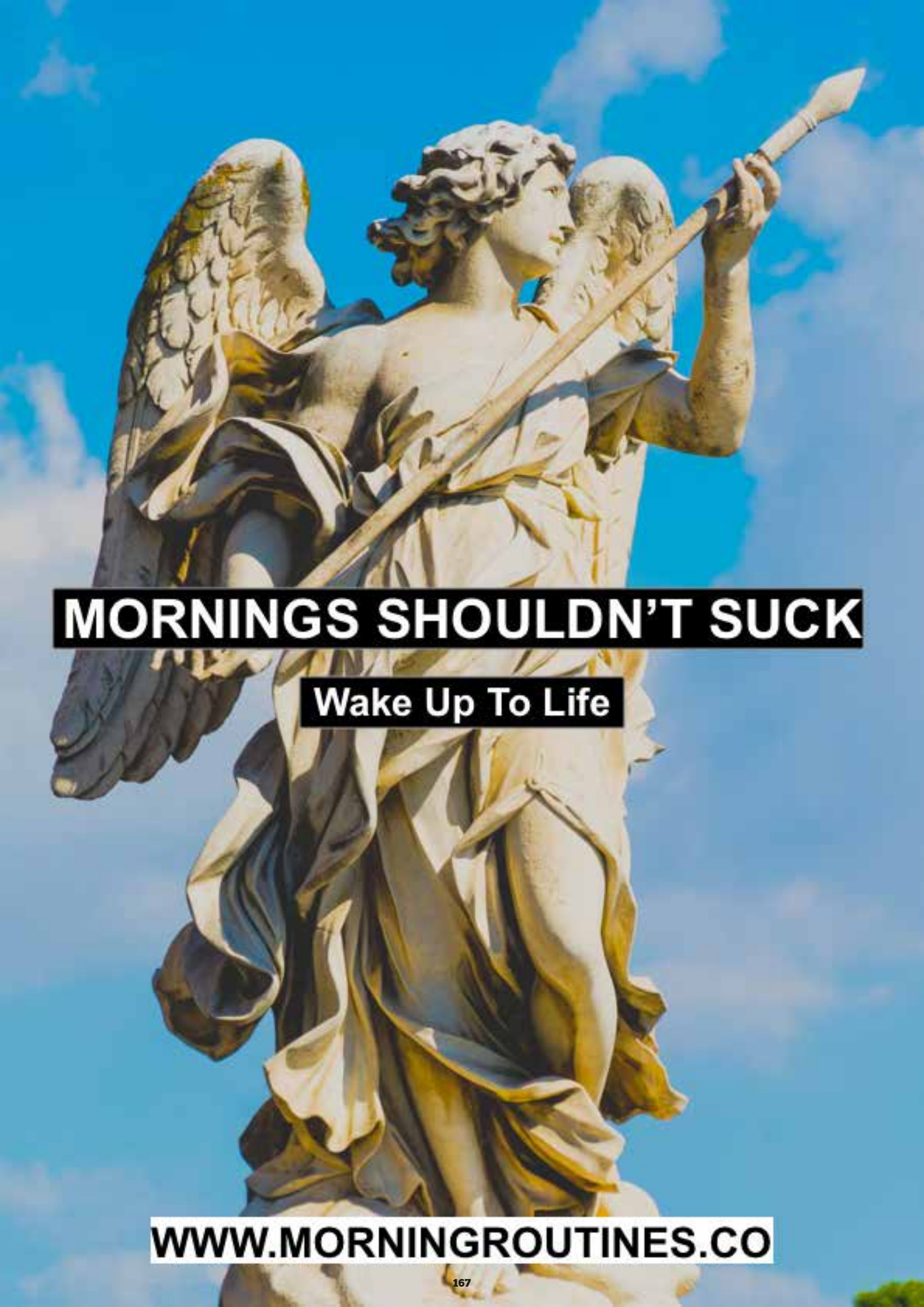
Napoleon exemplified the desire to place action in the center of politics. Early on in the Wars of the French Revolution – when he was merely a general, and not yet an emperor – Napoleon began to win victories that were shocking in their scale and completeness. In 1796, as commander of France's armies in the Italian theater, Napoleon shocked the Hapsburgs by utterly smashing all their armies in Italy, before launching an outright invasion of the Austrian heartland – including a harrowing crossing of the Alps. Further defeats in Austria itself forced Vienna to agree to the Treaty of Campo Formio – an astonishing document in which Napoleon annexed the Hapsburg Netherlands for France and completely ejected them from Northern Italy. Yet Napoleon surely never set out to achieve either of these things; he simply won all his battles and then decided what to ask for.

As Emperor, battle became the guiding animus of the French State, and of Napoleon's position within it. He understood that it was victory on the battlefield (and the accompanying personal loyalty of the army) that gave him legitimacy, and that battlefield success was his best asset in foreign policy. Rather than setting specific diplomatic objectives and then tailoring a campaign to achieve them, Napoleon preferred to simply smash the enemy entirely and then tinker with the map at leisure. No figure in modern history made battle so fundamentally central to all facets of foreign affairs. Napoleonic France's power eventually fell, overstretched by the same fundamental challenge that twice doomed a would-be German superpower: simultaneously coping with the financial-naval power of Britain and the land power of Russia. Even in defeat, however, Napoleon awed his foes. The Duke of Wellington, when asked to name the greatest general of the age, simply replied "in this age, in past ages, in any age: Napoleon."

While Napoleon's French Empire did not last, the primacy that he gave to action and battle was imitated by more successful statesmen who followed him. Otto von Bismarck, in very famous speech, proclaimed that

"Not through speeches and majority decisions will the great questions of the day be decided—that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by iron and blood"

Two years later, Bismarckian Prussia crushed Denmark in an eight-month war – the first of three wars that would presage German unification under the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Prussian crown. Indeed, for most of western history, it was taken for granted that conquest, victory, and action generated their own historical verdict. This was the idea implicit in the British Empire, upon which the sun never set, and in Manifest Destiny. In such a setting, the man of action was universally lionized – from Achilles, Alexander, and Caesar, to Theodore Roosevelt, Sir Francis Drake, and Garibaldi.

This perspective was lost in the twentieth century. This was in part due to the devastation of the second world war, which left permanent scars in Europe, but the Cold War played a major role as well. Soviet Marxism claimed to wield a scientific framework of human history, which predicted an immutable progression towards communism. In responding to this, western liberalism (in its various forms) increasingly came to view itself as an anti-framework of equivalent scientific and deterministic power. Rather than reject the Marxist view that history is deterministic as such, the west largely landed on the notion that history is deterministic in a different direction – a view that seemed validated by the fall of the Soviet Union, and which culminates in the end of history as proclaimed by Fukuyama, Friedman, and others. Now, it seems, that temporary enchantment is being undone.

Is Vladimir Putin a Great Man? Will he be remembered as a victor, a conqueror, a re-gatherer of Russian lands? A century from now, will he be viewed as a Russian Bismarck, or more like a later, more infamous German Chancellor? It is of course too early to say, because history – as some are only now discovering – isn't written yet. I do not know if Putin is a Great Man, but it seems clear that he is willing to try to be one. He has staked everything on action, on battle, on what he called "the patriotic forces" of Russia. He seems unbothered by global opinion, or the result of symbolic protest votes in the United Nations. There is only one verdict that he cares about: the verdict of history, and that verdict is being written by the Russian army in the Donbas.

Louis XIV ordered a Latin phrase to be inscribed on the barrel of his cannons: "Ultima ratio regum" – the last argument of kings.

Putin is indifferent to those barrels of ink that Franklin – or perhaps Twain – warned about. There's only one sort of barrel that matters now. He will write Russia's story, not with ink, but with iron and blood.

WE DRINK
NYC TAP
WATER

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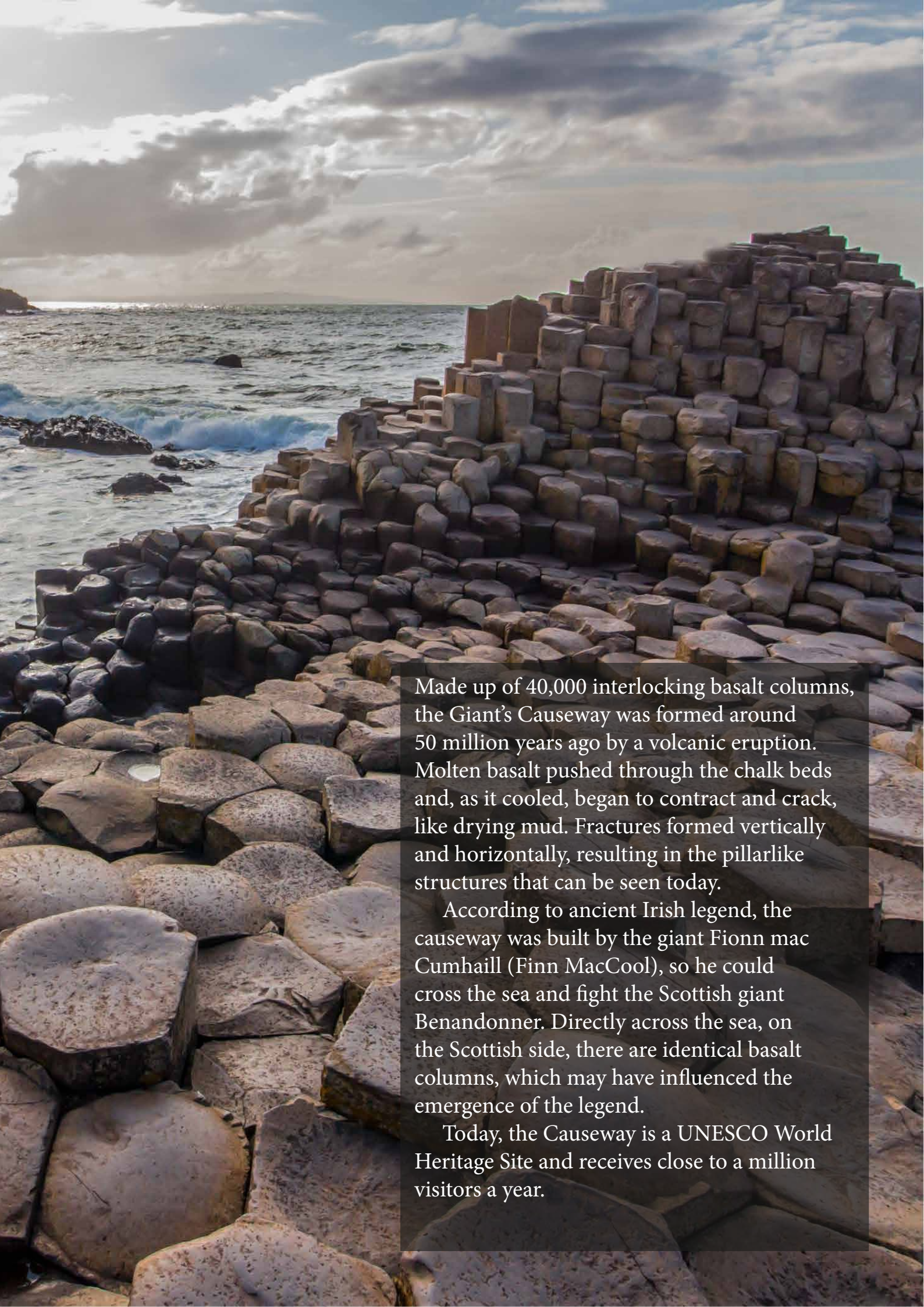
MW EXPLORE!

Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland

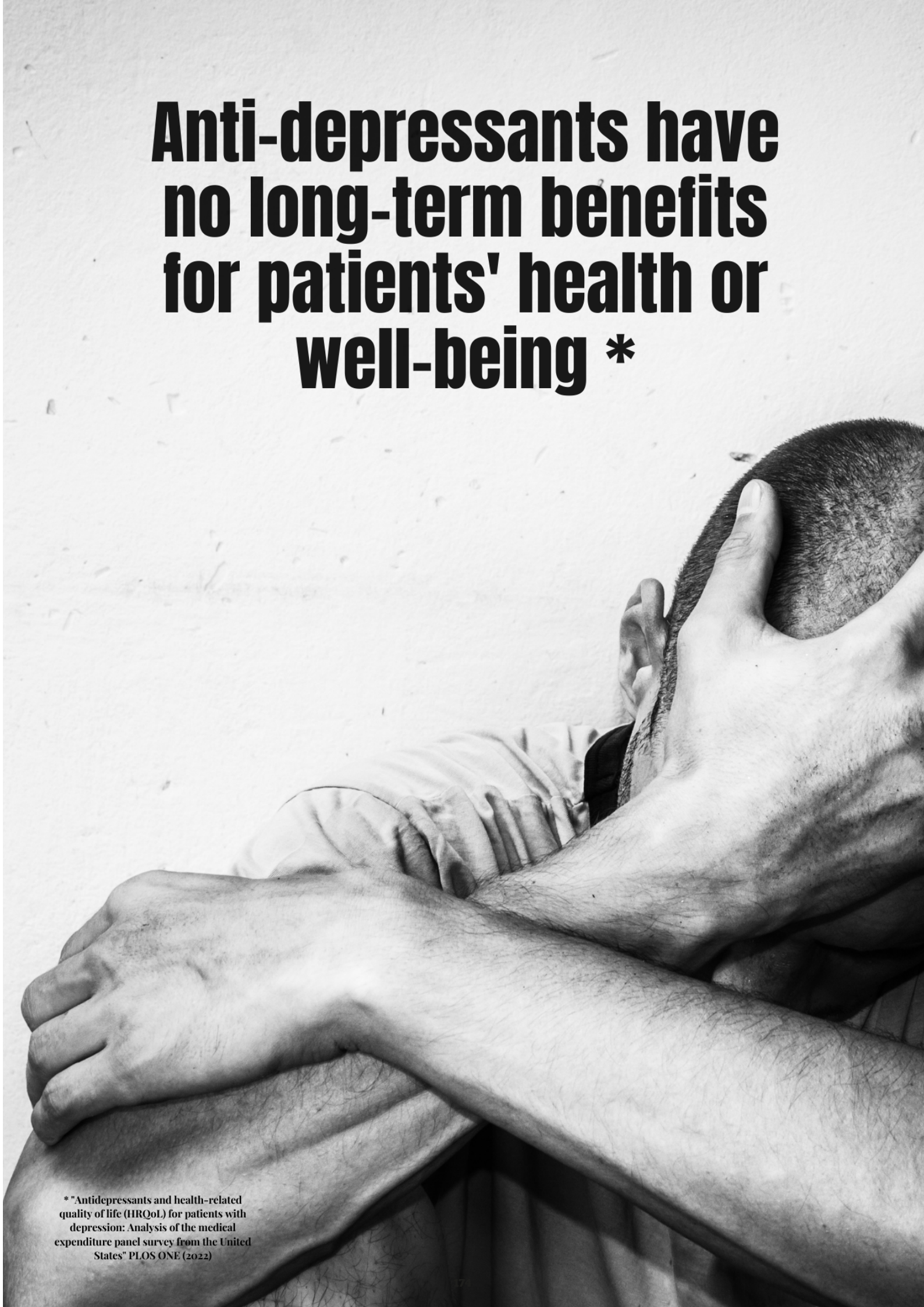


Made up of 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, the Giant's Causeway was formed around 50 million years ago by a volcanic eruption. Molten basalt pushed through the chalk beds and, as it cooled, began to contract and crack, like drying mud. Fractures formed vertically and horizontally, resulting in the pillarlike structures that can be seen today.

According to ancient Irish legend, the causeway was built by the giant Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn MacCool), so he could cross the sea and fight the Scottish giant Benandonner. Directly across the sea, on the Scottish side, there are identical basalt columns, which may have influenced the emergence of the legend.

Today, the Causeway is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and receives close to a million visitors a year.

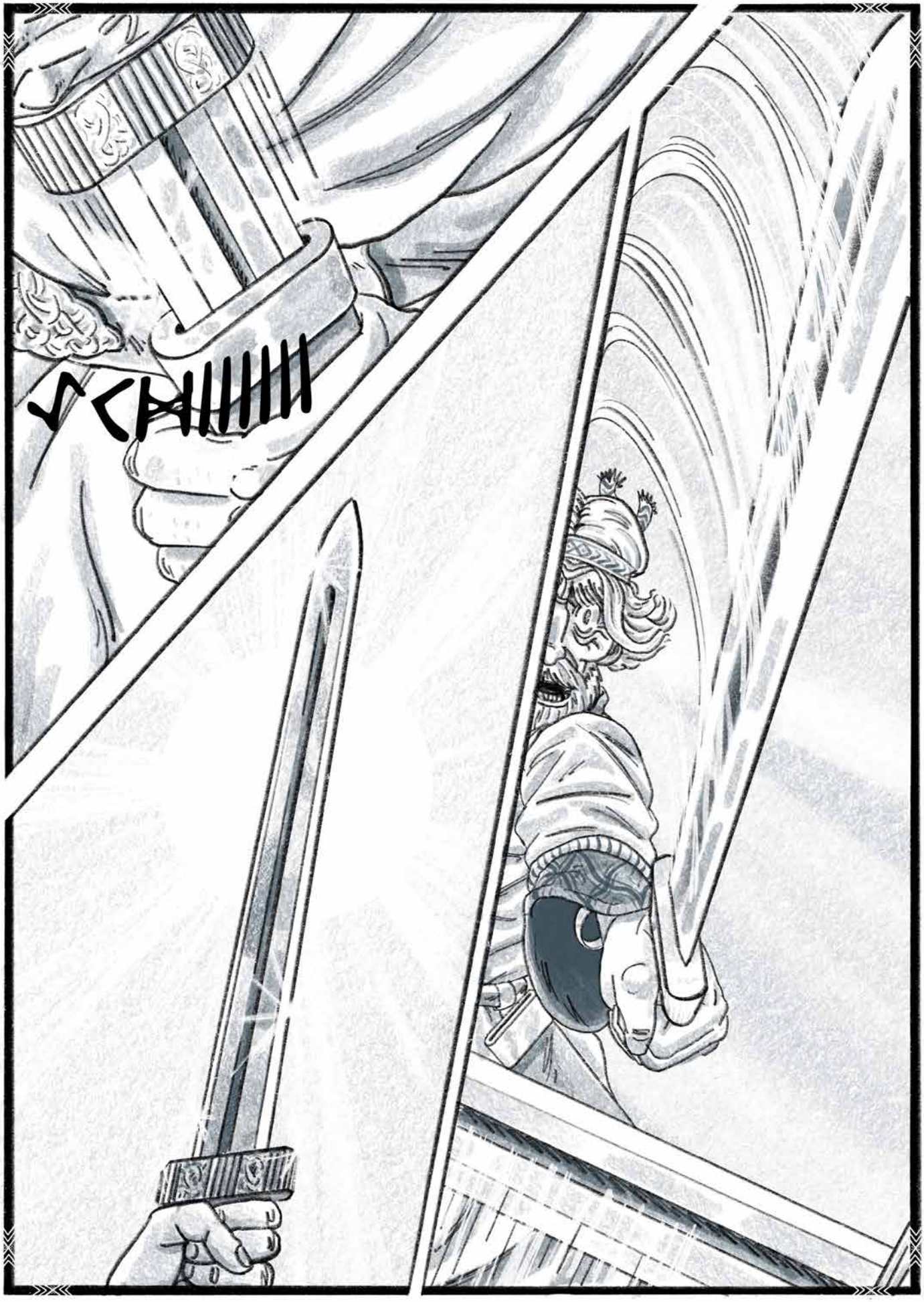
Anti-depressants have no long-term benefits for patients' health or well-being *



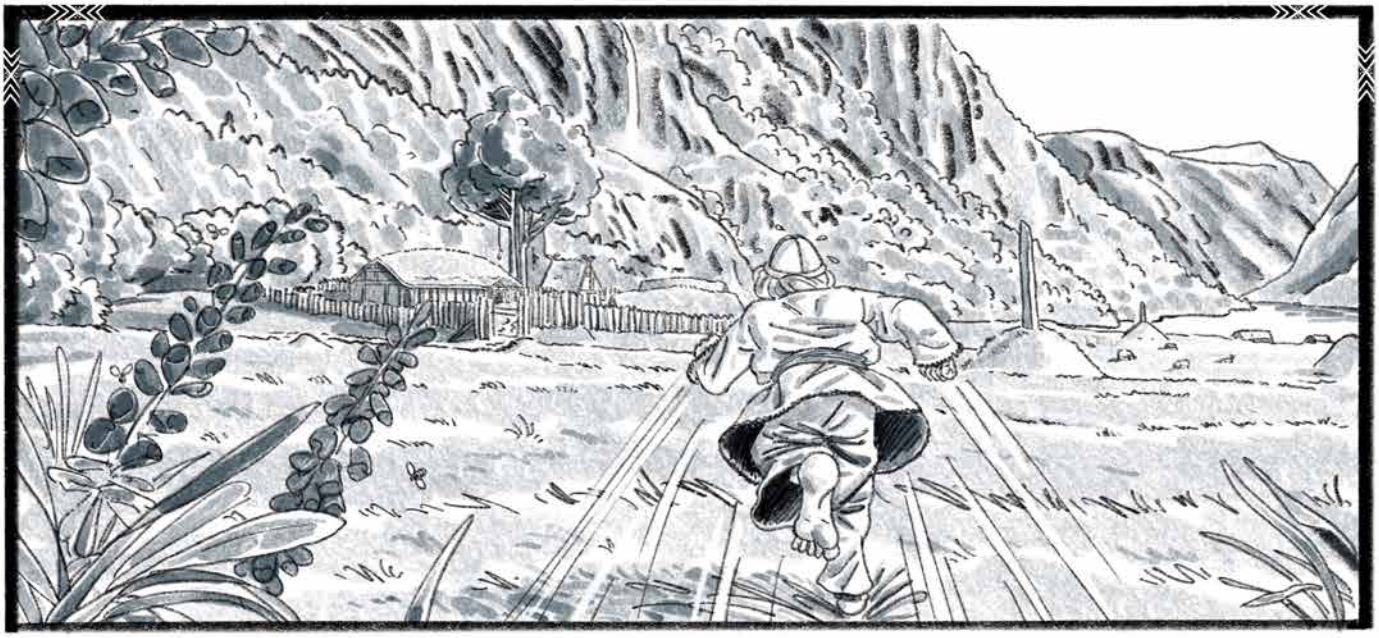
* "Antidepressants and health-related quality of life (HRQoL) for patients with depression: Analysis of the medical expenditure panel survey from the United States" PLOS ONE (2022)

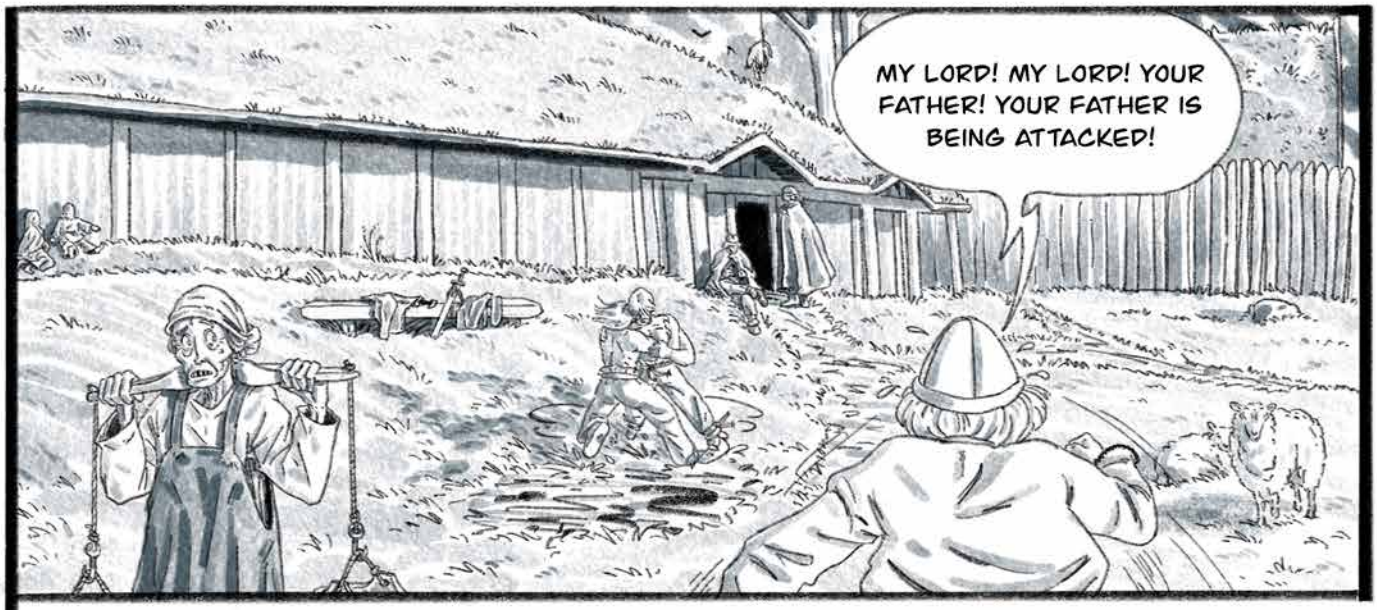
EINHERJAR

by DIDRIK MAGNUS-ANDRESEN
(@didrikmagnusand)


SCHIIIIII

AAAAAAAH!
KLANG!!




MY LORD! MY LORD! YOUR FATHER! YOUR FATHER IS BEING ATTACKED!

WHAT? TAKE ME TO HIM NOW!
GATHER THE HOUSECARLS AND BRING THEM!
HVOOSH!

KRAAA
IS THIS ALL YOU GOT? SHALL YOU BETRAY ME NOW?
COME ON!

UH.. THERE..
YES.. FINALLY..

FINALLY DO I SEE THEM.. THE VALKYRIES.
MY LORD..

FATHER!

KLAKK
KLANG

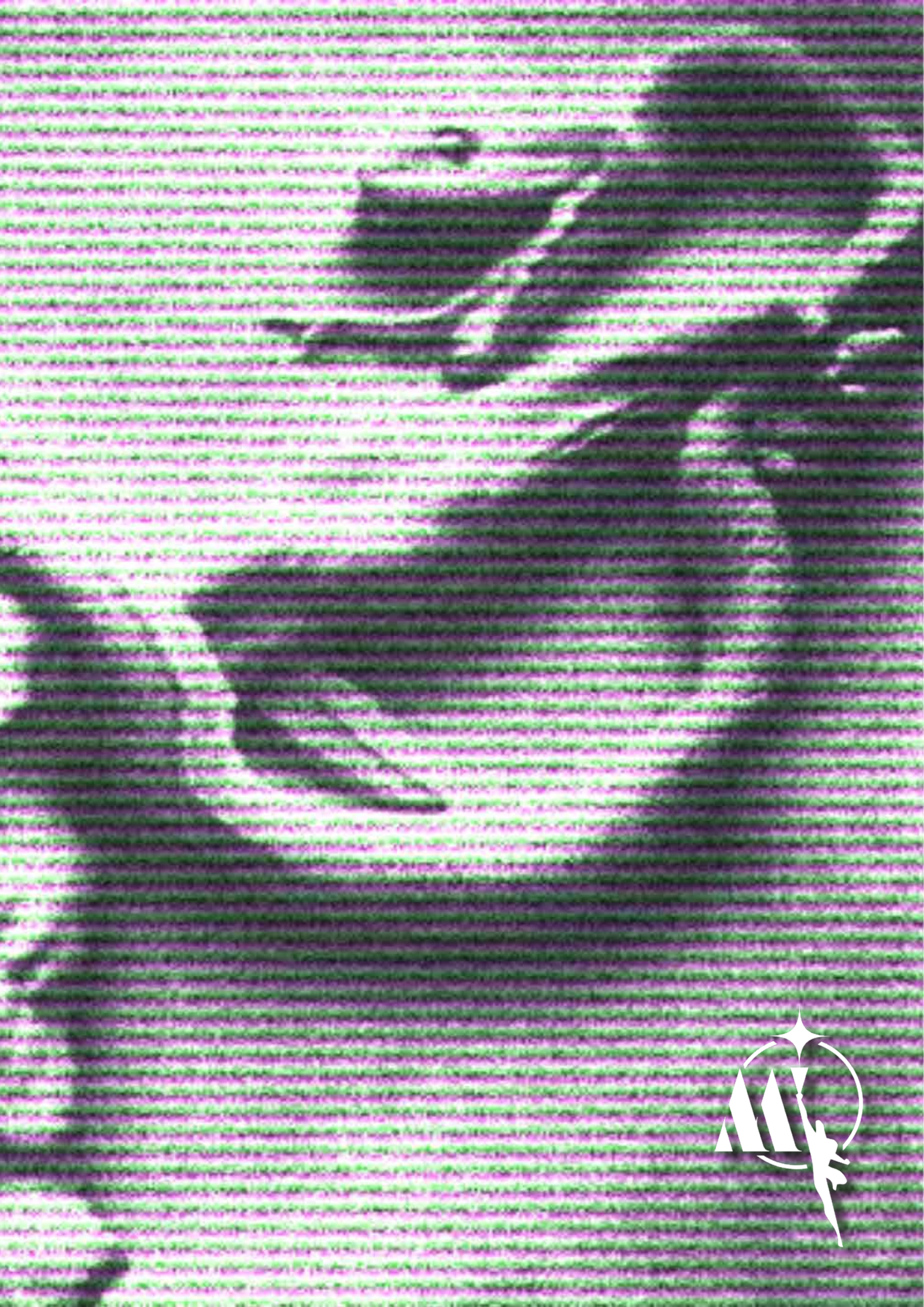
WAIT!
NAAA
IT'S NOT AS IT LOOKS...
KLAKK
YOU FATHER.. HE BEGGED ME TO DO IT!

DON'T LISTEN TO HIS LIES! I WANT BLOOD FOR BLOOD!

CHARLEMANG
COMING SOON NETFILX

JUST LISTEN TO ME, PLEASE! IT IS NOT AS YOU THINK! HE..
ARE YOU SAYING MY EYES ARE DECEIVING ME?
I SAW YOU MURDER MY FATHER IN COLD BLOOD! YOUR LORD BY HOLY OATH!
NO! THATS NOT WHAT HAPPEND! JUST LET ME..
LIEGE!
KILL HIM!

NOT PEACE
BUT A
SWORD



NOOR BIN LADIN
In conversation with
RAW EGG NATIONALIST

The MAN'S WORLD Interview:

For readers of MAN'S WORLD, my guest for this issue needs no introduction. You'll most definitely be familiar with REN's work, and beyond that, his life's mission educating us all on the benefits of raw eggs, good health, masculinity and much more. A true renaissance man of our times, the list of topics REN can discuss at length is long! That being said, for this issue we thought it would be fitting to have a conversation about his new book, The Eggs Benedict Option *(for which I had the honour of writing the foreword).*

In one sentence, The Eggs Benedict Option *is the antidote to the Great Reset. In the book, REN meticulously outlines the Globalists' efforts over decades to capture one of the most essential resources necessary for our survival and endurance: our food. Due to their success in controlling what we eat — and with it the success of deliberately downgrading its quality and advocating poor diet recommendations — our society has declined dramatically compared to the early 20th century. REN documents the factors and methods deployed that have led to a multitude of negative consequences, all undeniable: we suffer of weaker physiognomies, degenerative diseases, downgraded DNA, and decreased fertility, among many other ailments, largely because of the "food" we consume.*

While it is painful to take stock of the results caused by the modern Western diet, there is hope, and it lies in The Eggs Benedict Option. *The book shows us a way out of this hell they have planned for us — live in the pod, eat the bugs — by reclaiming the way we produce and consume our food. Household gardening and regenerative agriculture, practiced in widespread fashion by our ancestors but also in our recent past and in certain parts of the world today, can once again become the norm — a "New Normal" that actually benefits us. Solutions are out there and have been proven to not only work, but to replenish our soils as well, which have been stripped for decades since the advent of industrialized agriculture. The field of regenerative agriculture is fascinating, and* The Eggs Benedict Option *offers a great introduction to an essential part of reclaiming our autonomy from the Globalists.*

The book is a must read, so get your copy as soon as you can — and in the meantime, let's find out more from the author himself.

REN, you've been at the forefront of denouncing impoverished diets and the various poisonous chemicals that are found in our food, pushing instead for clean, nutritious eating habits. Tell us how the book came about, and what was the main takeaway you wanted to convey.

This will make you laugh. I had this old partially read copy of *The Benedict Option* [by Rod Dreher] kicking around on the floor, getting progressively more and more scuffed. Anyway, one day I looked across at it – I may have been sitting on the loo at the time – and all of a sudden it hit me. THE EGGS BENEDICT OPTION! Well, now I had a great name. But what to do with it?

Initially I thought I'd just write an essay about *The Benedict Option* and what I saw as the problem with the general thesis of the book (that it's predicated on the idea that intentional Christian communities will simply be left alone by their avowed enemies to do their own thing, which doesn't seem at all realistic to me). But then I thought, "the Eggs Benedict Option" is too good to waste on a short essay, so I decided it would have to be a book. I started riffing on the idea of a Benedict Option for RWBBs [right-wing bodybuilders) and what that might look like.

It quickly became clear to me that it would have to be about the Great Reset and the food transformation that the globalists have in store for us, something I had been following closely already. And since *The Benedict Option* lays out a positive vision for how Christians can respond to the increasingly hostile culture around them, I wanted to do the same. I didn't just want the book to be a description of all the bad things the globalists want to do. That would be extremely depressing – a black pill. So I needed a comprehensive plan to fight back.

Fortunately, I didn't have to look too far, since I had been reading a lot about regenerative agriculture. I've long been of the opinion that small-scale food production is the answer to so many of our current problems and I'd just been turned on, thanks to the *Small Farmer's Journal*, to the little known (in the West at least), but extremely important, form of agriculture known as "Russian household gardening" or "dacha gardening". This became the jumping-off point, then, for a plan to fight the globalist vision of the future of food with a renewed localism, at the social and political level.

I've long been of the opinion that small-scale food production is the answer to so many of our current problems...

If the book has a main takeaway, it's that although the powers that oppose us are great, their victory is by no means assured. Klaus Schwab is right about one thing: this is the perfect opportunity for fundamental change. It's just a question of whose vision of the future wins. Ours must prevail!

I think what most people fail to comprehend, is that all of this was deliberate. What makes the EBO so compelling – and convincing for those new to this theme – is that you only referred to official statements from the Globalists' mouths, demonstrating their machinations are indeed intentional.

Yes, exactly. This is something that greatly frustrates me when people start talking about the Great Reset. They start with a document like "Welcome to 2030", the famous "thinkpiece" from 2016 that provoked so much discussion and revulsion, and very quickly end up talking about ancient bloodlines and other stuff that just makes them look, to your man on the street, like a total crank. This is very bad. It's a distraction and it discredits everybody. Our opponents can simply say, "Look at these people. They're insane with all their talk of lizard people etc."

I mean, there are all sorts of understandable reasons why people let speculation get the better of reason when they talk about the Great Reset, not least of all because the World Economic Forum has a knack for the kind of stunning coincidences that would shock even the most tired of conspiracists back into life. Just look at Event 201, the pandemic planning exercise held in October 2019 that basically predicted every aspect of the coming pandemic, including the unheralded social restrictions that were imposed. My friend Eugyppius wrote very perceptively about this in Issue Four. It's mind-boggling. But it's also hard to get anywhere further than that initial jolt. Event 201 might incline you to think that the pandemic was, to some degree even if not entirely, a plandemic, but there's just no way to bridge the gap, as it were – in exactly the same way as, however strange it might seem that three prominent

opponents of the creation of the Federal Reserve just so happened to die on the Titanic, there's no way to get from that fact to a credible argument that the Titanic was deliberately sunk to ensure its creation. I talk about this kind of stuff in my Meditations essay for this issue of the magazine, and ask why we care so much about who or what Klaus Schwab actually is. That kind of talk adds nothing to what we already know.

And we already know a huge amount. There are books and articles and studies and public pronouncements, going back years, laying out exactly what the globalists want to do to the food supply and why. It's all there – publicly accessible – and just waiting to be given a proper airing. People think "You vill eat ze bugs!", but actually there's an entire detailed plan for a global diet that's been produced by one of the World Economic Forum's partners, the EAT Foundation. This "Planetary Health Diet" is a more or less entirely plant-based diet, developed in order to feed a projected world population of 10 billion in a way that is "healthy" (according to their perverted standards) and that allows the governments of the world to meet their climate targets. Everything you need to know about this project – who is involved and how, what they want to do and why – is there, ready to be discovered. If my book serves any purpose, I hope at least it will make people realise how far advanced the globalist plan is, and of course how bad it is too.

So we don't need to speculate about Klaus Schwab's links to the Third Reich's nuclear programme or whether Justin Trudeau and Jacinda Arden were created in a lab. The globalists want to force us to change our diet in the most fundamental way, in a way that has never happened in history (although there are important parallels), and that's more than enough to get people motivated to resist the Great Reset.

One of these important parallels in your account is with the Neolithic Revolution, which you call "the original Great Reset". Control over what we eat has been a part of our rulers' playbook for a long time then? How ancient is the control of food as a form of social control?

As I say in the preface of the book, social control and control of the food supply go together like peas and carrots. We're talking about one of the most ancient, most fundamental rules of government, which has been understood by rulers for thousands of years. I wanted to make this fact unambiguously clear right at the beginning of the book.

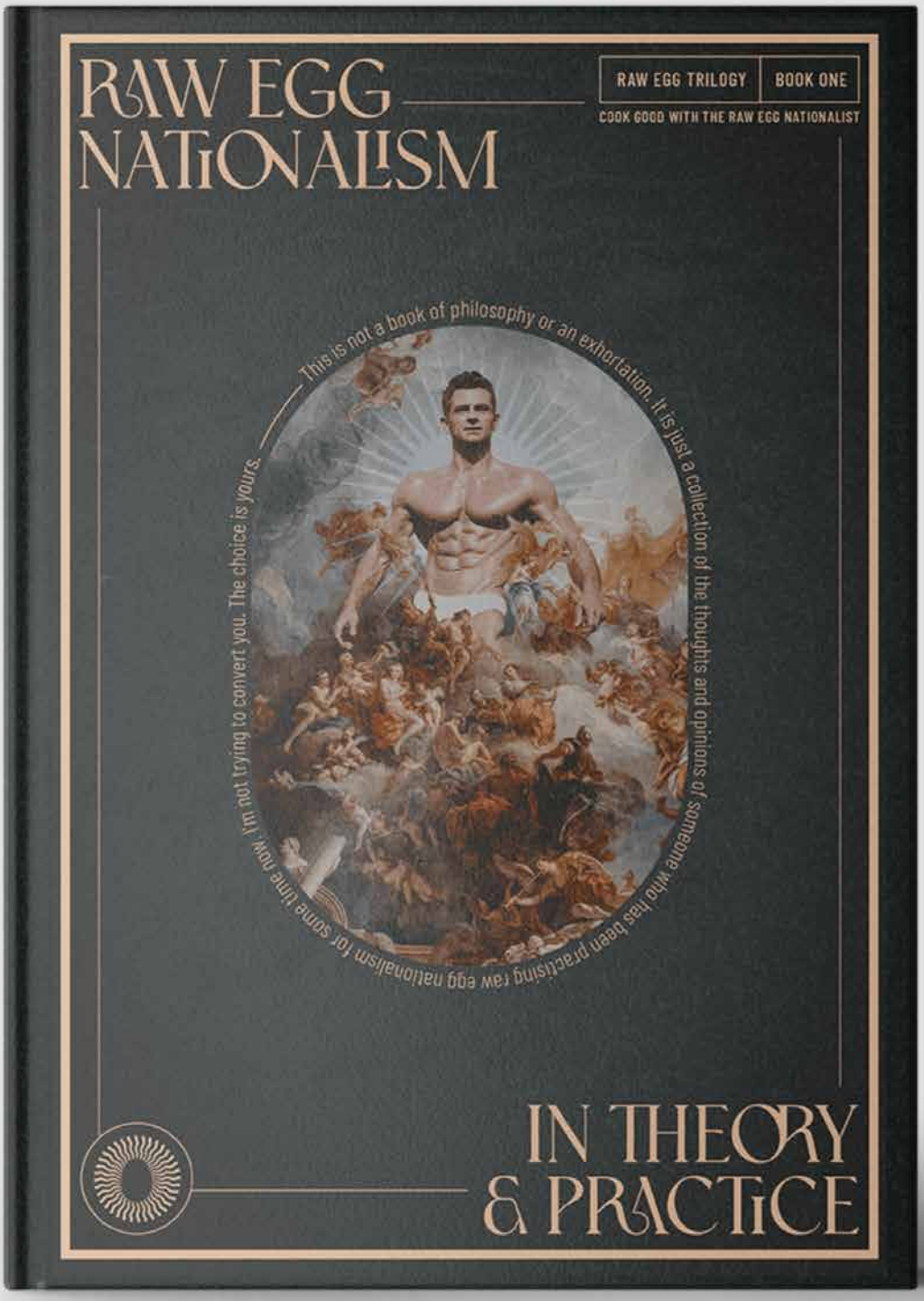
...the Neolithic Revolution brought terrible misery to the majority of people who were caught up in it

In the preface I discuss Plato's *Republic* and the idea expressed in the second book that the perfect harmonious society must be vegetarian. Although this isn't the society that Plato's Socrates ends up elaborating for the rest of the book, it's very striking that, nevertheless, he sees a vegetarian diet as being one that will best quiet the passions and desires of ordinary people, allowing them to live peacefully, without questioning their lot. The people as happy cattle, essentially. But behind that you have a more general fact – that as early as the mid-fourth century BC philosophers clearly believed that you could fundamentally change a society by changing its diet – which is no less interesting than the specifics of what Plato says.

Now this is ancient enough – we're talking 2,500 years roughly – but in fact we can go back even further, to the Neolithic Revolution, the creation of fixed-field farming in the Near East, to see the link between changing diet and changing forms of social control revealed in the most dramatic fashion. Rather than being the happy tale of Progress we're generally told it was, the Neolithic Revolution brought terrible misery to the majority of people who were caught up in it. Only a narrow elite, who often came in from "outside", as it were, as invaders, really benefitted. And this is clear in all sorts of evidence, whether we're talking about skeletal evidence of serious malnourishment among early farmers or evidence for societal collapse, which often seems to have taken place as a result of early farmers running away at the first chance they got.

An account of the events of the Neolithic Revolution, and a comparison with the Great Reset plan for food, is central to the book, not only to reveal that societies can be fundamentally transformed by altering how food is produced and distributed, but also to reveal what is at stake in the coming food transformation. I'm in no doubt that many of the things that happened to Neolithic man when

The original books that started a movement...


RAW EGG NATIONALISM
RAW EGG TRILOGY
BOOK ONE
COOK GOOD WITH THE RAW EGG NATIONALIST
This is not a book of philosophy or an exhortation. It is just a collection of the thoughts and opinions of somepone who has been practising raw egg nationalism for some time now. I'm not trying to convert you. The choice is yours.
IN THEORY & PRACTICE

...just got an amazing makeover

Raw Egg Nationalism, Three Lives of Golden Age Bodybuilders, Draw Me a Gironda and Raw Egg Trilogy: Available now from Amazon and the Rogue Scholar Book Store

he became a farmer – the malnutrition, the shrinking, the illnesses – are likely to make an unwelcome return if we're all forced to eat plant-based diets. I mean this in all seriousness.

Right. Your discussion of the physical changes induced by change in diet is fascinating – and scary. I highly enjoyed reading about the work of Weston Price, author of *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, who proved the superiority of animal vs. plant based diets. Information that would be useful for vegans...

If everybody who thought they wanted to be a vegetarian or vegan was made to read Weston Price first, only the most stubborn and deluded – sadly a decent proportion of vegans especially – would continue down that path. Another book I use quite liberally in the section on the probable health effects of the globalist plant-based diet is Lierre Keith's *The Vegetarian Myth*, which is an interesting combination of nutritional information and autobiography. Keith ruined her body by persisting in a vegan diet for nearly two decades, despite almost immediately starting to suffer from excruciating side-effects. One of the things that finally broke her – made her repent from veganism, if you will – was reading Weston Price and realising that she was essentially going against nature with her current diet. She was responsible for all of the dreadful things she was suffering, because she had chosen not to nourish herself with the foods that make human beings have perfect health – i.e. nutrient-dense animal foods. Weston Price is unequivocal that humans cannot reach their proper physical potential eating plant foods alone, and especially not industrially produced plant foods.

I should say some more about Price for those who don't know. He was a dentist in Cleveland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who noticed an alarming trend among his patients, especially the children. More and more he noticed malformed jaws – crowded teeth, cavities, narrow dental arches – that not only marred his patients' physical appearance, but also reduced their health and development and even, in some cases, led to serious behavioural problems. Price was convinced that this

...humans cannot reach their proper physical potential eating plant foods alone, and especially not industrially produced plant foods

was due to a change in diet: this was the time that people in the Corn Belt and the rest of America started to move from a diet of natural whole foods to industrially produced food, especially grain-based products. He decided, around about the 1920s, to travel the world and put his theory to the test by seeing if he could find traditional groups of people who displayed perfect dentition and learn what they were eating. So he travelled the length and breadth of the world over a period of years, from North America to the Torres Straits (Australia) via Africa and even parts of Europe, such as the Highlands of Scotland and high alpine Switzerland, and the book he eventually produced was *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*.

One thing you have to realise here is that dentition isn't just about your mouth and face. Dental development and health are a strong, as well as immediately visible, index of overall health and fitness. It's not for nothing that we place so much store by a beautiful, properly developed, symmetrical face. People whose faces are in decay are in decay more broadly. If you have a narrow face with crowded, rotting teeth and thin nostrils, you will, as a whole person, invariably be unhealthy.

Price discovered at least a dozen – I think it was 14 – traditional groups who were in "perfect physical condition" as a result of continuing their traditional diet. People like the Maasai, the Torres Strait Islands, Crofters in the Scottish Highlands, the Inuit. The traditional diets of these people varied from place to place, of course, but they were all built on the same foundation of nutrient-dense animal foods, especially organs like liver, fatty cuts of meat, eggs and seafood. Wherever traditional groups had given up these foods for modern industrial food, the same physical problems Price saw in his practice in Ohio were visible.

One of the most useful things Price did to support his thesis was take lots of pictures, and the most striking ones are direct comparisons of identical twins, one of whom still ate the traditional diet and the other, who had given it up. One looks great, the other not so much. With these direct comparisons it's basically impossible to argue with Price's thesis, and I'm not alone in thinking that he actually formulated ironclad scientific

rules for human health and development. These form the backbone of my case for a return to ancestral nutrition.

I think I ought to say, since we're talking about vegetarians and vegans, that they get one thing right at least: that industrial agriculture, especially the raising of livestock, is an abomination. It is. But what they get wrong is their insistence that this is the only way to farm animals, with the implication that livestock cannot and should not be raised full stop. No, we don't have to raise animals in concentration camps. Torture need not be involved. There are other ways. In fact, until very recently we raised animals in an entirely different manner, and that's what proponents of regenerative agriculture, which is very important to *The Eggs Benedict Option*, advocate returning to.

You draw heavily on Alexander Dugin's work, specifically, the *Great Awakening vs the Great Reset*. Your book, I would say, offers a concrete, practical solution for the Great Awakening. How has Dugin influenced you in writing the EBO?

Dugin is a very interesting character who's been in the news recently for unhappy reasons [his daughter was assassinated a few weeks ago in a car bomb that was clearly intended for him]. I've only read a small amount of his work, including some of *The Fourth Political Theory*, but what he says in his short book on the Great Reset is very interesting and useful for my purposes in *The Eggs Benedict Option*.

First of all, he offers us a compelling "genealogy" of the Great Reset, showing that it has a deep history and metaphysics that can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the emergence of a new philosophy known as nominalism. For the nominalists, basically, there were no such things as universal entities, only individual entities, in opposition to what the Platonists and Aristotelians (referred to as "realists" or "universalists") believed. Now, the relevance of this might not be immediately obvious to you, but what the victory of nominalism entails, ultimately, is the dissolution of all forms of collective identity. Nominalism has been an acid-bath for tradition in the West, beginning with the Reformation; continuing through the emergence of capitalism and liberalism, and the triumph over fascism and communism in the twentieth century ("the End of History"); and culminating in the Great Reset. All forms of collective identity, whether we mean religion, race or ethnicity, gender and now even what it means to be a human being ("posthumanism") have been or are being undermined by the nominalism that is at the heart of modern Western thinking. This is the kind of deep history of the Great Reset that we need, rather than speculation about ancient bloodlines etc. It allows us to see that the Great Reset is, in a very real sense, merely an outgrowth of this trend – the dominant trend? – in Western intellectual, social and political life, including the emergence of liberalism. Fully understanding this means, among other things, that we can't solve the problem of the Great Reset with more liberalism (the liberal's favourite solution). We need to think differently if we want to get out of this trap.

...we can't solve the problem of the Great Reset with more liberalism... we need to think differently...

As well as this genealogy, Dugin also offers an interesting account of what he calls "The Great Awakening". This is the global resistance that has emerged to globalism and the Great Reset, whether we mean Trump and QAnon, Putin's Russia, Islamic regimes like Iran, or the CCP. At present, most of this resistance is spontaneous and largely untheorised, but Dugin sees the potential for a more coordinated front against globalism, in which different nations or civilisations draw on their own native resources to resist the globalist vision of the future. Although I'm not entirely sure how much common ground nations like the US and China, or the US and Iran, can find, I do think that the idea of looking within – looking to alternative traditions in our history – and also looking to other, non-Western traditions, is one powerful way that we can imagine a new future.

Russia also inspired you in the latter part of the book when looking at agricultural practices. You recommend we look at their 'dachas' as a model of household agriculture that we should consider implementing in the West.

This is precisely what I mean by looking to alternative traditions both within and outside our own culture. Russian household gar-

dening is an ancient practice of small-scale agriculture that goes right back to the earliest days of the first Russian kingdoms, when peasants had their own plots of land in addition to the land they tilled for the local lord. It's incredibly productive – something like 50% of all food consumed in Russia by value is produced on people's own land, 90% of the potatoes, more than 50% of the milk and 50% of the meat – and has various incredible benefits beyond the high-quality organic food it provides. Among other things, household gardening keeps people fit and healthy; provides recreation for families and friends; helps build a sense of community (most of the produce is either consumed or exchanged directly with other growers, rather than reaching the market); increases the nation's food security; reduces inflation. It also has a deep spiritual and political aspect, rooting people in the soil of Mother Russia, which has been developed in a new homesteading movement called Anastasia. I talk about this at length in the book.

Although Russia is now an industrial nation with hypersonic weapons, and the majority of people now live in the cities rather than the countryside, 35 million households spend an average of 17 hours a week during the growing season working on their gardens (which is actually about half the time the average American spends in front of the television each week). Urbanites travel out of the city to plots in the countryside, whereas those who already live in the countryside might have a garden attached to their home and some extra land somewhere else nearby. These plots of land, on average, aren't all that big, but they provide a wealth of nutrition, from fruits and vegetables to animal products, because they're farmed intensively, using all sorts of time-honoured techniques to maximise yields, like companion planting. The fact that this system has been going on for so long, and that many of the plots have been in continuous use for hundreds of years, is a testament to its sustainability.

It's ridiculous that Russian household gardening hasn't received more attention than it has, but all sorts of prejudices exist in the Western mind about Russia, not least of all the idea that it's actually a country full of alcoholics who are always millimetres away from starvation or extermination. As a result, Russian household gardening is often portrayed simply as a response to the hardship of life in Russia, rather than a deep cultural form that also has a wider potential application outside the country.

...Thomas Jefferson... predicted that America would be in trouble if it ceased to be a nation of small farmers...

You make an interesting parallel with the US, and how this could easily be replicated there. In fact, it largely was already in practice at the turn of the century.

The US may not have an unbroken thousand-year tradition of small-scale farming, but we shouldn't forget that it began as a nation of small farmers and remained one until not all that long ago. Most of the Founding Fathers were farmers. And I think it was Thomas Jefferson who predicted that America would be in trouble if it ceased to be a nation of small farmers, echoing a very ancient Roman sentiment about the inherent virtue of the small farmer (as expressed for instance in the Horace poem, "Blessed is the man who, far from the city's business, tends his paternal herds…").

When the American frontier was finally declared closed in 1890, some, like Fredrick Jackson Turner, believed that Jefferson would be proved right. Life on the frontier, according to Turner, was what made all the disparate peoples who landed on American shores into Americans. The frontier was, in a sense, the nation's "safety valve", which allowed it to cope with the massive waves of immigration through the nineteenth century. With that gone, how would the huddled masses be assimilated and become Americans? The "Turner Thesis", as it's known, has been hugely influential, and politicians from FDR to JFK have called for the creation of new frontiers (welfare for all, science and the space race) to ensure the American nation continues to thrive.

There have also been various "back to the land" drives since the closing of the frontier, the most notable taking place during World War II, when millions of ordinary people were encouraged to grow their own food as much as possible. Various schemes have also been established, especially in impoverished urban areas, to create community gardens to provide extra food for the poor. Most of these schemes have been very

successful.

I'm not sure that Russian household gardening could *easily* be replicated in the US, but I still think it could happen. Here's a fact: the total area of lawns in the US is significantly larger than the amount of land under cultivation by household gardeners in Russia. So Americans already have the space if they wanted to put it to use, without the need for things like government land grants – although these have been used to great effect before in American history (e.g. the Homestead Act). One of the main barriers, I think, is the fact that the law in America favours big farmers and corporations. The title of one of Joel Salatin's most famous essays says it all: "Everything I want to do is illegal". You would need to create a totally new environment where the little man is encouraged and empowered to produce food and exchange it in his local community, without fear of repercussion. For that, I think, you'd need a renewed populism willing to take on the big corporate interests. That's no small task, but I think it can be done.

Joel Salatin is a fascinating figure, isn't he? Can you tell us more about the kind of farming he advocates?

Joel Salatin is a really inspirational figure. One of the best ways to get into his work is either through a collection of his essays like *Everything I want To Do Is Illegal*, or to watch him on Joe Rogan. It was Rogan who first introduced me to him, a few years ago, but since then I've read a lot of his work, especially while I was writing *The Eggs Benedict Option*.

Joel has a 500 acre farm in Swoope Virginia where he's at the cutting edge of regenerative agriculture. Regenerative agriculture is a model of agriculture that goes beyond simply being sustainable. The aim is not to maintain a certain level of fecundity but actually to restore and enhance it. In this aim and in their methods, regenerative farmers like Joel Salatin are doing more or less exactly what the Russian household farmers are doing, just on a larger scale and, importantly, with the greater involvement of grazing animals, especially cows. Household farmers and regenerative farmers alike shun the use of artificial chemicals and use a variety of time-honoured techniques like cover-cropping and companion-planting, techniques which have fallen out of favour since the advent of modern fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides (the inaptly named "Green Revolution" of the mid-twentieth century).

The Great Reset model of agriculture has nothing to say about how topsoil depletion will be combatted or reversed...

One of the things that's most interesting about regenerative agriculture is the absolute centrality of livestock grazing to it. In the regenerative model, livestock are not only responsible for converting indigestible plant matter into the most nutritious food we can eat, but through their grazing, trampling and production of manure, they also enhance the goodness of the soil dramatically. In fact, saying that livestock are central to regenerative agriculture is actually misleading. "Essential" would be a better word, because without them the whole enterprise would fail.

This is the complete opposite of the today's industrial model of grain agriculture, which includes a significant proportion of livestock-rearing, especially in the US, since much of the grain produced is fed to livestock in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Industrial agriculture on the standard model is often referred to as "extractive" farming, for the simple reason that it takes and takes and takes and never gives anything back. This is why, people like Salatin argue, we must go beyond mere sustainability. We've already depleted the earth's soils to such an extent that just sustaining them isn't enough: we need to restore them if we are to be able to continue farming in the long term.

The most dire predictions about the state of the earth's agricultural topsoil are that there may be as little as 60 years of agriculture left before the soils are totally exhausted. The Great Reset model of agriculture has nothing to say about how topsoil depletion will be combatted or reversed, only the confident assertion that we can feed 10 billion people an almost entirely plant-based diet simply by using new technology, including GMO and smart AI-assisted application of chemicals.

One thing people don't understand, and they should understand, is that the majority of the world's agricultural land is simply unfit for growing crops. Many people, including those who really should know better, seem to think we could just turn all the land used for grazing over to crop-growing, but they couldn't

Clockwise from top left: Joel Salatin; a Russian dacha garden; Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum; the Neolithic site at Çatalhöyük. Inset: the famous "mother goddess" of Çatalhöyük

be more mistaken. Over 60% of agricultural land is what's called "marginal land", which means that it's poor quality land that's only suitable for grazing animals. Although the remaining 40% is classified as arable land, i.e. suitable for crops, the truth is that this figure is misleading. Much of the world's arable land, for instance the arable land of North Africa, is only suitable for a limited range of agricultural products, like olives. Only 3% – that's right, 3% – of all agricultural land is classed as "prime" arable land, and much of that is in central Europe and southern Russia. If we ruin that, our options are very limited.

Both of these small and large scale farming methods are what true environmentalists (a completely co-opted term for big business and the Globalists) should be advocating for, since they allow us to take from the earth whilst replenish the soils. It sounds like the ideal food ecosystem, but goes against the entire narrative of finite resources the Globalists have been propagating for decades...

Yes, but you know, there's a strange contradiction at the heart of all of this. It's not the only contradiction in what the globalists say, either. On the one hand, as you note, they bang on endlessly about finite resources, the dangers of population increase – it's all a zero-sum game and so something will have to be reduced, drastically, if we aren't to destroy the planet. And they usually say, or at least heavily imply, that this must be the world population. This is the globalism of the Club of Rome (a huge influence on the creation of the World Economic Forum) and of the Georgia Guidestones. "Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature", as the Guidestones had it (may they rest in piss).

On the other hand, though, with the Planetary Health Diet, you have these blithe assurances that we must continue to extract, extract, extract to produce enough food to feed a massively expanded global population. The estimate that's used in the literature for the Planetary Health Diet is 10 billion by 2050. I'm sure I'm not the only one who finds himself a little confused by this contradiction, but I think I can square the circle without having to claim that all of the writing and pronouncements I've been analysing for the book are just a smokescreen or cover for depopulation. I think the Great Reset model, including the Planetary Health Diet, is one that the globalists will go through with if they're allowed to. In the long term, this may lead to drastic reductions in population, but I don't think that's the immediate goal.

...the extractive model of industrial agriculture is the one that makes the most money for corporations

The main theme of the Great Reset is corporate control, and the extractive model of industrial agriculture is the one that makes the most money for corporations. That's why they want to intensify, rather than abandon it. At the same time, there has to be a compelling argument to justify the dramatic transformation entailed by the Great Reset – the total surrender of individual wealth and sovereignty – and what better way to justify this than the twin threats of climate change and population explosion?

Following your discussion of these special agricultural methods, you put forward the case that they can form the basis of a 'renewed populism'. Can you elaborate on your vision?

Unlike in Russia, where the growth of homesteading movements like Anastasia has happened spontaneously, without government support, largely because small-scale agriculture is so embedded in Russian life, in America the growth of such a movement will necessarily be political. There's no other way around it – but that's not a bad thing. Far from it.

The movement that was first given the name "populism", which emerged in the late nineteenth century, was principally a movement of small-scale farmers. And they were fighting to protect their lives and livelihoods from enemies that we would recognise today: corporations and other predatory institutions like the railroads and banks. The prices of crops were declining, banks were foreclosing on family farms and the cost of using the railroads remained almost prohibitively high. Life for the ordinary hard-working man and his family was becoming unbearable. Their great leader was William Jennings Bryan, who is most famous for his "cross of gold" speech and for his later role in the Scopes monkey trial. Like Jefferson, Bryan was convinced that America would change for the worse if it allowed its small

farmers to suffer. He said – and I'm paraphrasing – that you could burn down America's cities and they would spring back up again the next day, but if you burned down America's farms, the streets of every city would soon be overrun by grass.

Small-scale agriculture, then, was the original incubator of populism in the US, and I think there's just something about being a small farmer – the kind of work it involves and the kind of people who do it – that makes it necessarily so. The honest hard work; the self-reliance; the rootedness in the soil and the rhythms of the earth rather than the rhythms of money and city life. I'm sure I'm romanticising it a bit, but that doesn't make it any less true.

In my vision, populism serves a kind of dual purpose. I think there will need to be an initial popular political movement to break the corporate stranglehold on agriculture and US politics. Of course this will find support in rural communities, but those communities are not the same as the communities of the 19th century. There are nowhere near as many farmers as there once were. Urban communities will be more important, but they have much to gain, not least of all access to better quality food. If the corporate system is broken up, and the government provides incentives to small farmers, perhaps to adopt regenerative methods, then we will see, potentially, another kind of populism emerge that flourishes once again among a multitude of small farmers.

But breaking up the corporate system, which has already caused so much damage to the health of the nation and to the environment, and which has warped the government's political priorities both at home and abroad, will have to be the main priority.

The book is a warning: the Globalists have a near total control over our food supply chain, and they are aiming for full control by the year 2030, in accordance with their stated plans (the Great Reset and the UN's SDGs). The next moves to accelerate their consolidation are already in motion: artificial food scarcity/famine as a result of the manufactured Ukraine crisis, farmers going out of business due to governments' 'ecological' policies and acquisition of land, to name a few. Tell us about the future

It's very important to realise that you don't need to make meat illegal to prevent people from eating it

that awaits in terms of the type of food we would consume and the allowance system along with it, should they succeed.

So, as I've said, the Planetary Health Diet – the new global diet developed by the EAT Foundation, a partner of the WEF – is almost entirely plant-based. Even though it allows for some consumption of traditional animal products, the amounts are token amounts, which is why it's best to see the diet as a plant-based diet rather than an omnivorous one. The amounts of traditional animal products are so small – a quarter of a large egg and maybe a wafer-thin slice of meat a day – because their carbon footprints, as we're endlessly told, are just so bad.

Given that climate change, together with global population growth, is the principal justification for the need to transition to the Planetary Health Diet, it's likely that adherence to the diet would be ensured through a personal carbon allowance. Basically, everyone has a personal allowance of emissions they can "spend" on services and commodities, including the food they eat. It's possible that these allowances will be earned through working, but I think it's more likely that they'll simply be administered as a form of universal basic income. AI and automation – the much-vaunted Fourth Industrial Revolution – are going to make the majority of workers totally redundant, so there isn't going to be any work for them to do – unless our globalist overlords decide to get us all walking on giant treadmills for eight hours a day, like the inmates of a nineteenth century British prison. I think the scheme will be tied to a Chinese-style social credit score too – just look at what happened to the truckers in Canada who had their banking frozen – so it may be the case that bad behaviour will result in reductions in your allowance.

It's very important to realise that you don't need to make meat illegal to prevent people from eating it. You just have to make it so expensive – either in monetary terms, as we're seeing now, or in terms of its carbon cost – that it's beyond the reach of ordinary people. If the decision is "Do I have a Beyond Meat burger and heat my home or do I have a real burger and not heat my home?"

GREAT
RESET

most people are going to choose the plant-based alternative and warmth. People are making such decisions right now, as the economic downturn starts to bite. It's already in the headlines that meat consumption is massively down due to inflation, and things are only likely to get worse this winter.

As far as the actual practicalities of using the system are concerned, we're obviously talking about a credit card or banking app. As long ago as 2007, the Labour government in Britain commissioned a detailed study into individual carbon allowances, on the assumption that such a system would use a credit card of some sort.

But that was fifteen years ago, and we're well past hypotheticals now. Now we have credit cards that allow you to track your carbon footprint in real time, and restrict your spending on that basis, rather than your financial means. There's the DO Black card in Sweden, a partnership between a fintech startup and Mastercard, which allows you to see the emissions generated by every purchase you make using the card. The card has a set emission limit, so you can't pollute too much, and offers various options to offset your emissions as you spend. So the technology is ready; although its use is voluntary at present. All that's needed is the infrastructure to support it on a global scale, and the political will to make people use it, whether they want to or not.

The EBO ends on an encouraging note. We will defeat the Globalists, and we won't eat the bugs! Please share some of your optimism to close, as many will undoubtedly benefit from it in these trying times.

Absolutely. We can win – we will win! I have no doubt about this. As terrifying as the threat of a total globalist victory is, nothing about it is certain. Yes, these people are extremely powerful and, yes, they've got us on the back foot, but it will take far less to defeat them than you might think.

As the famous meme says, "If the situation were truly hopeless, their propaganda would be unnecessary." Not just the propaganda though: all of the absolutely desperate things the regime has been doing, especially in the US, to accelerate collapse and rig the political system. They're a sign of weakness as much as strength. Just look at the presidency of Donald Trump, for all its faults and failures. I believe it should be a cause for hope. The relentless attacks, the all-or-nothing attempts to smear, discredit, silence and nullify him – all of these things showed just how terrified the globalists are of a USA that doesn't dance to their tune. Which is why they're still doing their utmost to prevent a second Trump term. All it takes is one man and a movement, and I have no doubt that the behaviour of the regime will radicalise more and more people and make them realise what is truly at stake.

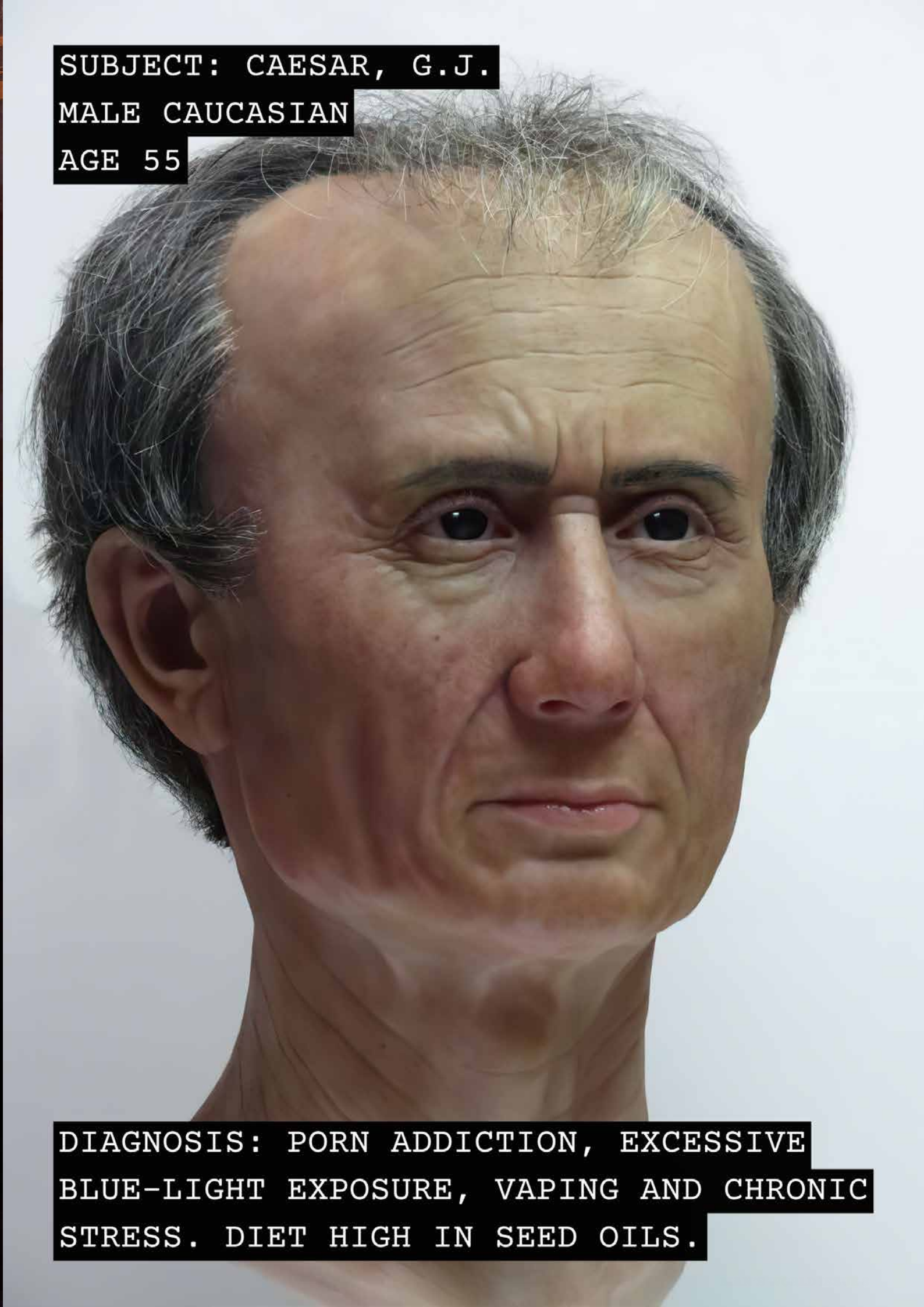
This isn't reason to be complacent. In fact, we must be much more vigilant and much more active than we have been thus far. I don't think we can just "trust the plan" as the QAnon people would have us do. We all need to be working hard, building friendships, building local networks and spreading the word. Because we have everything to gain – but also everything to lose if we fail.

Wait! Last but not least, we must talk about the upcoming Tucker Carlson Originals documentary on masculinity, coming out this fall. Judging by how people completely lost their minds when the trailer came out, it's fair to say we can expect a total meltdown of the Internet when the whole thing drops! Having had an early viewing thanks to you, I can say it is just SO GOOD.

If the entirety of the last two years still feel like something of a dream, this Tucker documentary is definitely the part I'm having the hardest time believing. I watched the documentary for the first time with one of my best friends and, honestly, we stood in stunned disbelief for the entire 35-or-so minutes, then immediately watched it again from the start to make sure we hadn't just imagined it. But it really is real! Obviously I have to keep the details close to my chest, but let's just say that it's going to enrage all the right people, delight all the right people and help spread our message to a far wider audience than ever before. I can't think of a bigger white pill at this moment in time. ETA is October. Get ready!

The Eggs Benedict Option is available now directly from antelopehillpublishing.com, or from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Book Depository and other third-party retailers.

@_drawthentic_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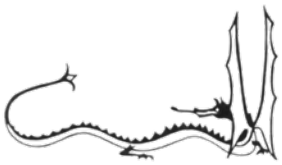

by SUMMER SUNRISE SEEKER

The ruins clung to Long Lake like smoke over a whispering fire. Blackened posts jutted where the bridge once soared, leaving a scar on the lake's smooth features– a fire-kissed reminder of a battle dearly won.

Among the sun-bleached timbers stubbornly lingering in their noble vigil was a man. Folk gave Old Laketown wide berth. Superstition and filial piety formed a buffer around the once great city on the water. All men avoided it. All men but Brynner.

He first came to the ruined pier as a child, fleeing some entity of youthful imagination. Instinctively he had known it was a place where no tormentor might follow. The moss-coated planks had felt slippery underfoot, but still solid despite the years of neglect. Water sparkled under the sun between them, bringing pebbles to shimmering life as the pier gradually sunk into the lake. Ahead lay causeways and bridges and homes with windows of broken glass whose rafters stretched out to the heavens unadorned by shingle or thatch.

Brynner remembered lowering his feet into the cold mountain-fed waters on the bridge, at the very edge where his ancestors had cut it down and cast it to the lake many years before. As time passed he would come back some days when he needed space of his own.

One day he saw something shining in the distance near the center of the ruins, a mere twinkle of light midst the blackened ruins. Could it be? He could not be sure from a distance. He felt a yearning, but the water was too cold to swim in for long, even now at the height of the alpine summer, and the teetering causeways of Old Laketown stretched too steep to offer reprieve from the chill.

That night he dreamed of a glitter in cold water.

*

In the morning he took his father's fishing boat. He rowed it between the blackened piers, watchful for snags or submerged wreckage.

After a time he came to the center of the city, where the market had stood. The destruction was complete. Not a floorboard remained of the great landing where men had once bought and sold goods from far-off places. It was if the market had vanished into thin air, into clear water. In its place, beneath glassy hills of water lapping at the worn pilings, lay the Dragon.

Bones curled in the shallows some five yards below the surface, sun-bleached and perfectly preserved. The great wyrm was splayed across the rounded stones of the lake floor as if sleeping. Vertebrae stretched nearly high enough to breach the surface between waves and its ribs sunk out of sight into the lake-bed below. Scattered among the bones and pebbles was the treasure.

Gold nuggets and coins, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and diamonds– all glittering in crystalline water where they had fallen from the beast's breast as time pared flesh from bone. In long years of rest on its hoard the dragon's chest had become studded with gold and jewels, forming a bed of brilliant color for its bones to rest upon. The words of his village's greybeards echoed in Brynner's mind, “Let the wyrm's treasure sink into the earth, let no man disturb that cursed place.” He had always known they spoke out of fear of the past, but now as he looked upon the great skeleton on its jeweled bed he could not help but feel a sense of awe regarding the beast. Such fear it had wielded: even in death its legacy burned in the minds of old men. Even now they did its bidding and kept its wealth from the victors.

He could hear breakers hitting the weathered piers and bulkheads further out in the lake, but things were still in the old marketplace: the collapsed

center formed a sheltered cove of sorts. The only thing that disturbed the water was Brynner's oars, gently forming ripples that subsided before ever reaching the edges of the clearing. The sun shone harsh white, reflecting the glow of the dragon's glitter below until he felt suspended between walls of light. He set the oars into the boat and drifted, peering into the sparkling shallows. The dragon's vertebrae were pale, sun-bleached from the receding waters of summer. The bones showed no sign of degradation as they rested on the lake bed, smooth and proud. He gazed into clear water shot through with gemlit sunbeams and reached a hand in. The water was tepid, as if the dragon's bones still emanated warmth.

The sun bore down strong on the boat and he felt as if the lake might start to steam under the heat. The water seemed to part reluctantly under the bow, like crystalline treacle setting solid. Insect and birdsong blurred into heavy texture, forming a smothering haze under the midday sun. When he reached into the water besides the grayed timbers of the rowboat he half expected it to be solid to the touch. He felt relief when it accepted his outstretched hands easily, with nary a ripple nor splash. Beneath the boat gems glittered, cool and clear. He slipped into the water, otterlike, without a ripple. Floating seemed effortless. He felt he could sleep suspended there in the clearing between fire-scarred piers and walkways.

But still the sound of insects and birds welled into a dull roar reverberating across the surface of the lake. The boat seemed filthy, vaguely threatening, looming rusty and worn in the clear blue. He recoiled, then dived. Gems glowed, gently undulating in water-refracted sunlight. Brynner pushed towards them, clear-minded, without thought. The heat and constant hum faded, and the treasure swelled before his gaze. There, under a mound of gems, he saw an opening that led deeper into the great skeleton, a dark space that hinted at a cavernous void. Brynner pushed towards it with liquid-slowed fingers. Water seemed to pulse against his skin. The sun above was warm too, and the rocks between the glassy gems were cool, and the blackened ruins of the old marketplace stretched above almost like a throne, and for a moment a heart beat once more between the dragon's ribs, until once again it slowed, then stopped.

*Seeker tweets @_forest_seeker_*

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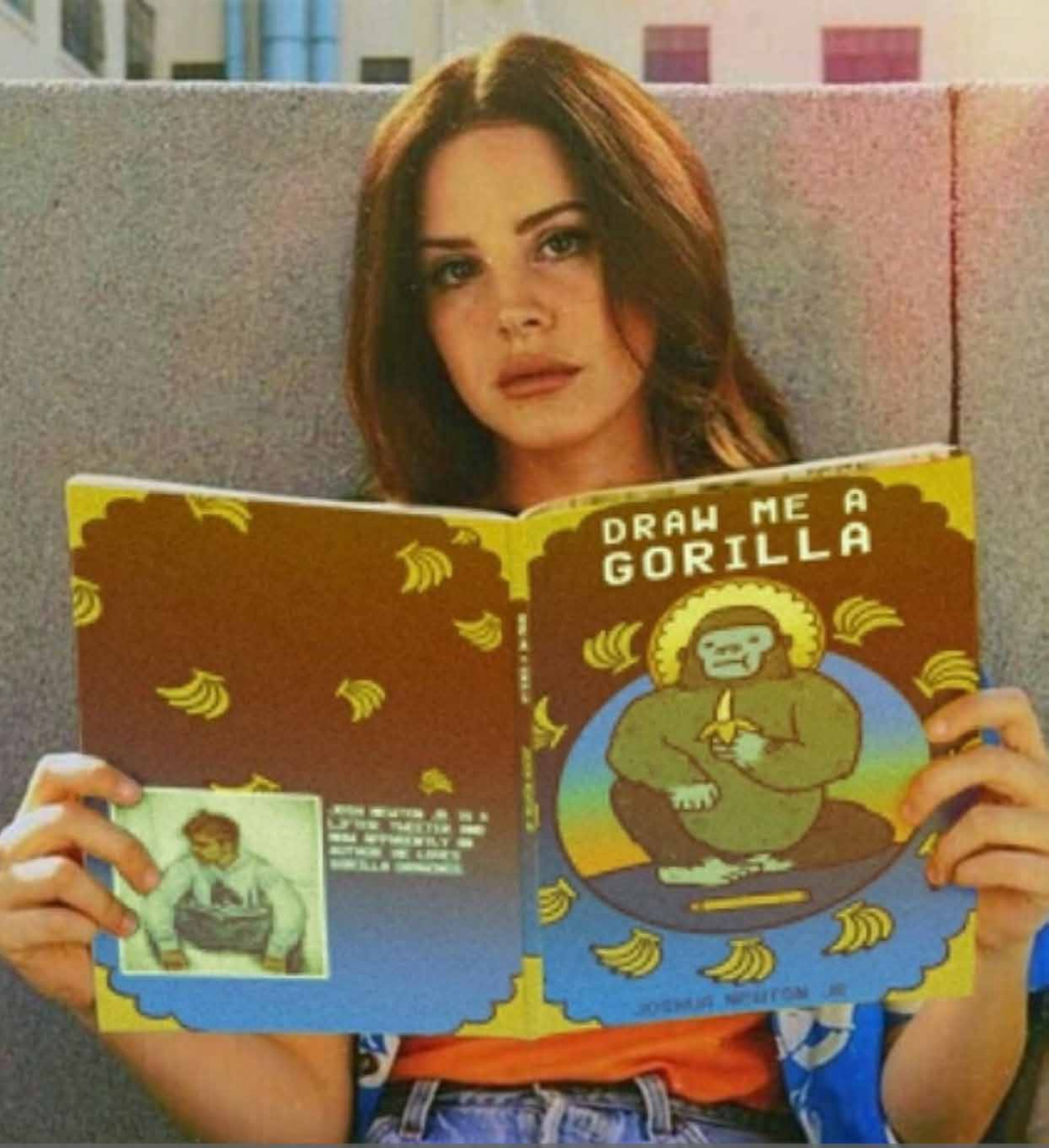

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A PRIMER ON CIVIL RELIGION

What is it and what does it demand of us?

BY SECOND CITY BUREAUCRAT

Civil Religion is difficult to define. Broadly speaking, for my purposes, it is the set of customs, mores, and values undergirding public life, governing day-to-day social interactions, and filling in the "penumbras" (to borrow a metaphor from constitutional jurisprudence) of the more formal laws and regulations which govern us in America. If we think of our representative democracy as a formal system of rules and processes governing the operation of the state and the mediation of political disputes, then by analogy, Civil Religion is an informal system of norms and processes governing social intercourse and other aspects of public life not specifically regulated by law.

There isn't much agreement on the substance of Civil Religion, although one can find agreement at a high level of abstraction. In casual conversations where I've raised the term, most people suggest it's dead or never existed on a broad scale. Perhaps there is truth in these claims. Nonetheless, most agree on the existence of a vague set of values espoused by influential people in America, which many Americans are raised to uphold and encouraged to internalize. These values include charity, tolerance, privacy, reasonableness, moderation, compromise, and humility, and imply the devaluation of fanaticism, obsession, pride, vanity, excessive sentimentality, and self-pity.

2CB HAS A SUBSTACK!!!

Yes, that's right. The second city's most favoured son has a brilliant new Substack. This essay is adapted from one of the first paid posts he put out, in July.

"Paid!?" you splutter. But of course! As the Bureaucrat himself puts it, "I once considered myself a man of principle, one who would never betray the free spirit of anonymous communication by demanding money, until I saw this one post by Paul Skallas." In said post, Skallas boasts of making six figures from Twitter-posting and sleeping with "hot female fans", before lamenting whether life truly has now run its course for him. Can you blame a humble bureaucrat for wanting a piece of *that* action? Exactly.

Visit secondcitybureaucrat.substack.com to sign up now. He tweets @citybureaucrat. But you knew that already.

In practice, this suite of values manifests through public behaviors or rites, known as civility, that sustain some level of trust in public spaces among strangers. American individuals are supposed to exchange these behaviors like gifts regardless of group membership or personal disposition toward the other, like Achilles extending the courtesy of the primordial guest-host relationship to his enemy King Priam in the Iliad. These behaviors include speaking in turn, respecting personal space, not budging in line, using professional and English honorifics in appropriate situations, inventing inoffensive ways to address controversial issues, and not appropriating public spaces of trust for personal purposes (don't "make a scene"). If you were to imagine my twitter account as a real person and not a satirical account, and twitter as a public space, civility is the exact opposite of how my twitter account comports itself.

Civility, the public face of the Civil Religion, is to a certain extent like an aesthetic. While Americans are expected to internalize the values of the Civil Religion, the Civil Religion itself, being a charitable and tolerant religion, is ultimately agnostic toward, and thus tolerant of, people who privately deviate from its values. Nonetheless, everyone is expected to behave in public as if they had internalized those values, and any public deviation from this expectation – any misbehavior or incivility – is to be assessed aesthetically. For example, while we must tolerate someone who is egocentric, it is acceptable to judge their public displays of egocentrism as vulgar and declasse (as John Murray Cuddihy wrote, an American is expected to avoid excessive use of the "vertical pronoun").

Civility is also the unwritten law to which we're expected to conform if we want to exercise our formal civil rights. It's the law that allows you to be removed from a voting booth if you show up to vote in the nude. It's the law that allows a judge to hold you in contempt, remove you from court, or even bind and gag you if you're excessively disruptive during a criminal trial. It's also the law under which journalists investigate, try, and punish you after you're doxxed for posting the n-word on social media.

These ethical-aesthetic, private-public distinctions therefore correspond to two categories of Civil Religion observance: those who have internalized its values and experience guilt when they violate their Civil Religion conscience (for my younger anon followers, a "moralfag"), and those who only observe its public rites to the minimum extent necessary to get along, and who only experience shame when their transgression of a public rite is exposed ("hiding your power levels"). In other words, our Civil Religion accommodates Dark Triad and Light Triad personalities.

Genealogy of Civil Religion and the Ethnic, Racial, and Sexual-Gender Contexts

Much has been written about the genealogy of our Civil Religion. Although it's currently fashionable to ascribe its origins wholly to Christianity or the rise of capitalism (depending upon the form of historical reductionism you prefer), ordinary people from my generation mostly know its public practices from their parental and institutional upbringing, and its intellectual basis from the speeches and writings of the Founding Fathers, Framers, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr. I think it's reasonable to focus on the most popular and recent restatements. Whether the Civil Religion is a success or failure of Christianity or some other intellectual, material, or religious element in history is beside the point here.

In its earliest American form, most writers agree that the Civil Religion was established (or evolved) at least partially in response to religious diversity. In his famous lecture The Broken Covenant, Robert Bellah suggested that the American Civil Religion includes religious content by providing a "religious dimension" to our interpretation of the nation's history rooted in a "conception of divine order under a Christian or deist God". That may be the case, but at this juncture I'm not concerned with delving into this, except to concede that the original Civil Religion was individualistic and conceptually Christian in that it separated the individual from his religion and material circumstances, rendering each citizen an individual who "happened to be" Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, heathen, etc. Each citizen was treated as if their religion was an accident of upbringing or personal choice and not an essential property of their being.

In practice this meant that religious rituals and customs were either private matters solely practiced among co-religionists, or secularized public displays that were generalized and moderated to the maximum extent possible so as not to give offense to strangers. The secularization of the holiday season is an obvious example here. Less obvious is the creation of holidays like Hannukah and Kwanzaa to coincide with Christmas. The elements of each religion most offensive to

Historically, groups are drawn into the Civil Religion through shaming rituals... and through status-seeking

non-members, such as the convictions that Jews are God's chosen people, Catholics are members of the one true Church, and protestants are possessed of the one true Biblical interpretation, are driven into the private sphere by the self-effacing demands of civility.

Much to the chagrin of orthodox religious adherents, this privatization relativizes each religion by implication, because civility requires that one behave as if strangers to your religion are nonetheless equal, i.e., requires that one behave as if one's core religious precepts aren't true. As a compromise given in exchange for this concession, American civility has come to tolerate some level of distinctness or uniqueness in the public sphere, and this is the function performed by inoffensive public rituals like Christmas and Hanukkah.

Almost immediately this principle was extended or "secularized" to cover white ethnic diversity, albeit under the guise of religious diversity. The tripartite religious stratification of Protestant, Catholic, and Jew was employed to mask underlying ethnic differences – e.g., among WASPs, Irish, Italians, and Jews. The conceptual umbrella of religious tolerance extended its canopy over differences in ethnic practices and beliefs so that, for example, eastern European Jewish disrespect for individual privacy in their traditional communities was subordinated to the values of the Civil Religion. American non-Jews would tolerate Eastern European Jewish folkways as a private practice, and Eastern European Jews would refrain from imposing those folkways in their public dealings with non-Jews. At the same time, more benign ethnic practices like cuisines and festivals were ethnically secularized and brought into the public sphere for all to respect, if not enjoy.

Extending the Civil Religion Beyond Religion and White Ethnic Groups

The exemplary statement of our Civil Religion is found in Martin Luther King Jr.'s I Have a Dream speech, which calls for political change in universal terms while discouraging the fanaticism and obsession inherent in movements based upon bitterness, hatred, and violence. More specifically, it calls for the expansion of our Civil Religion's ethical values, and therefore the rites of interpersonal civility, to race relations, so that race is treated as religion – an accident of an individual whose public treatment should depend upon the content of their character (meaning their observance of the Civil Religion). The racial beliefs of southerners and northern white ethnics were likewise to be driven into the private sphere under King Jr.'s updated Civil Religion.

King artfully draws the religious umbrella over race by calling for "Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics" to "join hands" and
- generalizing and publicizing a particular aspect of Black culture
- sing a "Negro spiritual". In this way, a particular aspect of Black culture (as with the publicized aspects of Judaism, Catholicism, and white ethnic groups) is legitimized and brought into the public sphere. In other words, the Black belief in their own uniqueness is given symbolic public legitimacy by universalizing the Negro spiritual.

Finally, after racial inclusion comes sexual and gender identity inclusion by the privatization of certain individual convictions about proper sexual conduct and gender roles, and by the public legitimation of certain aspects of sexual and gender identity uniqueness, like pride parades and pronoun civility.

Civilizing Effects

Historically, groups are drawn into

John "Borzoi" Chapman

Cultured Grubs

Dispatches From America in Collapse

THE WHITE SWAN

FAISAL MARZIPAN

IT DRINKS NYC TAP WATER

the Civil Religion through shaming rituals, where high status elites shame groups that deviate from the Civil Religion, and through status-seeking, where members of outsider groups aspire for recognition in civil society. Of course, a core goal is often civil rights concessions from the government; and there is a reciprocal shaming ritual whereby establishment elites and assimilated groups make concessions on their own customs that affect the aspiring group.

In exchange for securing recognition by the Civil Religion, a newly emancipated group is supposed to civilize by moderating its behaviors and translating its practices through the spirit of the Civil Religion. For example, gays are to be married and have nuclear families like western heterosexuals while the more unique aspects of gayness, celebrated as "queer culture" by Queer Studies majors (like public anonymous sex, sex as artistic transgression etc.), are to be minimized and relegated to the private sphere like the offensive views of orthodox religionists and racists discussed above. Expressions of these now-private practices in public are supposed to be deemed vulgar and uncivilized, with people who find them politically attractive being assessed as suffering from some sort of character flaw (consistent with the MLK Jr. framework).

Tensions

The foregoing survey already exposes some of the fault lines in our Civil Religion. One of the most obvious is the connection between the Civil Religion, adherence to civility, and the evolution of civil rights laws. A Civil Religion premised upon tolerance is evolving in concert with the coercive power of the state, from the enforcement of civility in court rooms as a precondition for one's exercise of fundamental constitutional rights to the immense civil rights law leviathan that Christopher Caldwell describes as a second constitution in The Age of Entitlement. Indeed, while you may be entitled to harbor racist thoughts in private, it is, for example, illegal to make hiring determinations based upon an applicant's race. To this second constitution should be added foreign policy concessions like the "Special Relationship" with Israel and similar but more minor concessions granted to groups like the Armenians and Turks.

Another fault line is our tolerance of group narcissism, though the sense in which it is a problem is a complicated matter. There hasn't, for instance, been a concerted effort to civilize Gypsies under the Civil Religion in the same way that other white ethnics were civilized. Apart from some reality TV minstrel shows like My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding (shout out to Frank Ely), American Gypsies have had little overt participation in public life. One reason I suspect this is the case is that Gypsy identity is premised in part upon Gypsies being outcasts punished by God and despised by the Gadjo (the Romany word for non-Romany). Their theodicy requires ostracism from society to validate its explanation of the world - an ostracism which, because it requires intolerance from civil society, is fundamentally at odds with our Civil religion.

Because this tension has been overcome with other groups mentioned above, as each group either explicitly or at least metaphorically relied upon a similar theodicy, I doubt there are any substantial group identities that are fundamentally incompatible with the tolerance of our Civil Religion. Jews are the most literal parallel to Gypsies with their theodicy of ostracism and wandering, Catholic and Protestant have their legacy of conflict and secrecy, Irish and Blacks have their histories of repression, and even Sex/Gender minority groups have their identities partially rooted in hidden, ostracized subcultures.

The problem with tolerance instead derives from the question of what kinds of public difference should be tolerated: do Gypsies need a Gypsy holiday? Can any of their particular ways of life be generalized and publicized without offending the Civil Religion?

Civility is a sort of common good. You're entitled to goods from others and they're entitled to goods from you, but people are entitled to those goods regardless of whether they choose to reciprocate. This can lead to a tragedy of the commons. At a sufficient level of abstraction, tolerance can operate paradoxically to undermine the equilibrium among groups admitted to the Civil Religion, through excessive tolerance. In other words, charity and tolerance come to license groups and behaviors that undermine the Civil Religion itself. This point has been made many times by individuals from across the political spectrum regarding all aspects of bourgeois liberalism, from its political institutions to its laws and morals. If an elite is too tolerant, they erode incentives to civilize and assimilate into their more moderate model of public life, because their tolerance undermines the importance of other Civil Religion values like humility, compromise, and reasonableness, and because their excessive tolerance suggests a lack of confidence in the Civil Religion.

“Mount of Five Treasures”
Nicholas Roerich,1933

Tempera on canvas
Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York

SPORT

Polo players make $500k per year on average yet there is no clamor for stadiums to be "modern". Pitches of grass and dirt are maintained by locals and even bystanders who will enter the pitch to stomp down divots during breaks.

Indoor sports venues are pushed onto the middle and lower classes so the cycle from breathing office air to breathing car/bus air to breathing indoor sports arena air is complete. "Why go outside?" the poors ask, with 2.42 billion web search hits today.

How the OTHER

Oil tycoon Getty heiress Ivy Love married her boyfriend with Sen. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) officiating in San Francisco in 2021. Continuing the established trend where wealthy people in their early twenties marry quickly – enabling more children and consolidating wealth – young matrimony is healthy.

SEX

The middle and lower classes are instructed by politicians, public schools and government agencies to wait until marriage, to not marry or have children young, to try multiple partners until marriage, and that bringing stepchildren into marriage is OK. The greatest risk of assault (sexual and otherwise) to a child in the United States is their stepparent.

With federal government employees in Washington D.C. making 25% more money than the average American, meat is on the menu. Capitol Hill boasts six burger joints and red meat with carb-free options (not plant patties) are offered from the Supreme Court to Union Station. Milkshakes made with whole milk (not soy or oat) are sold by the caterer's gallon.

DIET

Almost all fast-food joints push a plant-based patty these days. Made with agricultural refuse sludge, the patties are highly processed (ingredients include pea protein isolates, canola oil, refined coconut oil) and contain hormonal ingredients (soy).

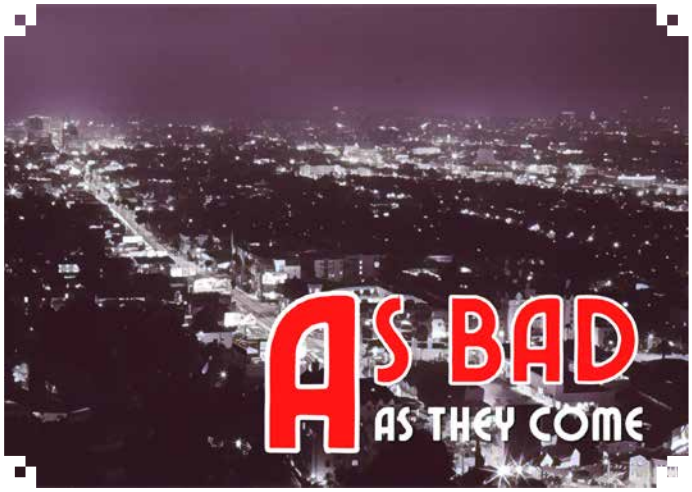
by SARA SASS

HALF LIVES

Sunscreen? Air travel? Global warming? Huh? St. Tropez, Dubai, Tanzania and the Seychelles are where the wealthy choose to jet set. "Global warming" be damned.

TRAVEL

Repeatedly told to save up to afford a trip to Paris ("the City of Lights!"), ¬New York City ("the City that Never Sleeps!") or Beijing ("the Great Wall City!"), hardworking people find that these cities are disgusting, expensive hellscapes – a tragedy matched only by Biden's motor skills.



1206 Kings Way was a fortress. One of the Frank Lloyd Wright jobs peppered throughout the hills, it loomed like an Aztec monument carved into the mountain path. Dutch reloaded his .38, grabbed a 12-gauge out of the trunk, and hoofed it up the dark and quiet street toward the mansion. He hugged the treeline all the way to the gate and followed the wall of hand-carved stone to the lowest point in the terrain. He set the shotgun against the wall and pulled himself up. From there he clocked the cars in the massive horseshoe driveway.

It was a full house. He hopped back down, grabbed the shotgun, and kept moving to the far corner of the wall.

He went over. His instincts took control. As his body moved – climbing, rolling, ducking – his mind went back to '43.

Romania.

His squad had to seize a German communications hub inside an old castle in the village of Bran. It was all in the name of safeguarding an air raid on German fuel reserves. Operation Tidal Wave. All that time in the thick of it, Dutch had never been scared. He wasn't afraid of any man on earth, or even of dying. But in that village, in that castle, Dutch could feel something in the air, the soil, the stones of the castle walls. It was something old that reached all the way back to the deepest primordial pool.

Something evil.

Something *wrong*.

Dutch was one of twelve men that went into that castle and one of three that came back out. That was the only time he'd ever felt that old and evil feeling – until now.

The house had three floors. Dorothy would be on the third. The highest point.

He climbed to the second level. Most people didn't lock their doors or windows on the second level, maybe devil worshipers didn't either. He found a plate glass window that was ready and willing. He let himself in. He made his way through the twisting corridors, past the expensive art and Old World trophies on the walls. There were animal pelts, horns, and heads – spears and axes made of wood and stone and iron.

And the HEAT. The mansion was sweltering.

Dutch could hear commotion coming from the first floor. He could feel the density of the crowd beneath him. He saw stairs leading to the third floor but caught the glimmer of warm light from below. As he made it to the end of the hallway he peeked past the corner and down into the sprawling living room and saw the source of the deep hum throughout the house.

Chanting. Or rather, a hymn in some language that wasn't English. Two lines of sycophantic supplicants on either side of the living room, wearing dark, hooded robes and chanting dark verses.

In the middle of the floor was a man and a woman rutting in sweaty savagery. And seated in a large chair in front of a roaring fire in the ornate hearth was the Magus; tall and lean, and naked but for the black goat head he wore over his own. The light of the fire and the shadows of the moving bodies must have been playing tricks on Dutch's eyes because the Magus's limbs looked abnormally long.

The voices grew louder in tandem as the couple on the floor approached their ecstatic finish. And as they reached climax the devoted onlookers all drew knives and fell on them in a stabbing storm.

Dutch dashed up the stairs while they were distracted. He moved with exceptional speed and silence for a man his size. He opened each door in the hallway, searching for the woman.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Jackpot.

She was in a small bedroom, taped to a chair in nothing but her slip with a black cloth bag over her head. He walked over to her and put his hand where her mouth would be, but much more gently than he had with Becher.

"I'm not going to hurt you." he whispered. "I'm here to get you out. Do what I say and you'll be just fine."

She nodded. Dutch took the bag off her head. The bastards had gagged her. He pulled a switchblade from his jacket and cut the tape that held her arms. She pulled the gag from her mouth.

"Are you a cop?" she asked.

"I used to be."

"If you kill these twerps it can be our little secret."

Dutch thought that was funny. She got up from the chair but her legs wobbled and she fell to the ground.

"Damn pins and needles," she said.

"Here," Dutch said. He grabbed one of her stunned legs and began rubbing feeling back into it. It was a nice leg. She rubbed the other. Dutch looked into her eyes. She seemed steady enough. He figured she hadn't seen anything like the horror show downstairs. He was relieved at the thought.

His hands worked up to her knee and she gave them a little smack.

"Watch it, buster." She said. Dutch grinned.

"How did they ever take you alive?"

The bedroom door opened and a skinny little shit with a bandage on his ear stepped into the room. Dutch was on him in a flash and gave him the neck treatment, but this time it was messy. The guy's head did a full one-eighty and the skin split open from his ear to his Adam's apple. Blood sprayed the walls. Dutch lowered him to the floor and went back to Dorothy.

She had some feeling in her legs now, all right.

Dutch opened the window. The top of the second floor formed a rampart right outside. He turned to Dorothy.

"You're getting out of here. It's easy enough to climb down if you follow the edge of the house. It will take you all the way to the street." He handed her his car keys. "My Buick is at the end of the road. Take it and get out of here."

"What about you?" she asked.

"I'll find my way."

He helped her out the window. She turned around. Her head just above the sill. She was one hell of a vision in the moonlight.

"Wait," she said. "I don't even know your name."

Dutch smirked. He leaned his face out the window.

"It's Dwight," he said. "But everybody calls me Dutch."

Dorothy stood up on her tiptoes, kissed his cheek, and hit him with a look that would have made a lesser man swoon.

"Go get 'em, Dutch." She turned and made her way across the crenelated rooftop. He should have followed her out and been done with it but he knew that he couldn't. Couldn't let this lie. He knew he was a bad man – as bad as they come. But he wasn't like the Magus or his cronies.

He wasn't evil.

And even though he was sure that when he died he'd go to the same Hell as they would, that didn't mean they got to live in the same world as he did.

Dutch grabbed the 12-gauge and opened the door.

When he stepped out of the room they were waiting for him at the end of the hallway.

They screamed in unison and rushed him. He couldn't tell how many. Just a black mass of gaping maws and sharp knives in the dark. He fired into them.

BAM! One of them took it right in the chest and flew back into the mob.

BAM! Another one lurched forward and caught it in the head. Their skull exploded into the eyes of the one behind them.

BAM! Two for one. But they kept coming.

BAM! A woman shrieked as half her face came off. She ate the floor as the others trampled her.

BAM! The last one spun like a top and Dutch lifted the shotgun just as the next man brought down his blade with an overhand stab. Dutch deflected it and hit them so hard with the butt of the 12-guage that he pinned his head to the wall and felt his skull crack like a hard-boiled egg. He kicked the next apostle so hard in the midsection they let out a wheezing sound like a wounded mule. As they pitched forward he swung the shotgun like a club into the top of their head and shut them up forever.

But the work was not done. Still more came for him. He took a slash to the shoulder as he stiff-armed one of them. He pulled his revolver with the other hand and shot the knifeman point blank in the face. They drove him back. Ferocious as he was they were not afraid of him. They were a far cry from Becher and his lackeys. He would have to kill them all.

Dutch smiled.

He spent his last five shots in two more screamers but got stabbed in his gun-hand. He dropped the .38 and crouched down just in time to dig his shoulder into the middle of a charging congregant and throw him over his back. The assailant rolled onto his stomach to push himself up but Dutch pinned him to the floor with a foot in the base of his back. With his foot planted, Dutch reached down, grabbed the man's face with both hands, and yanked upward. There was a crack like thunder.

Dutch stood up straight, taking deep breaths of the hot, blood-charged air. His powerful muscles dripped sweat and blood. The dead man at his feet was the last of the black-robed fanatics.

Deep laughter came from the far end of the hall.

Deeper than the grave.

Deeper than Hell.

The Magus stood at the edge of the stairs, laugh-

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MMXXII
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Est. 2022
KNOCKOUT CLUB
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20 22
Readers of
MAN'S WORLD
receive 20% off
USE CODE
MANSWORLD20%
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ing at his dead followers. Laughing at Dutch. He was a towering black shape in the darkness, wreathed by the flickering light of the fire below.

"Come and get it," Dutch said.

The Magus stopped laughing and said something foreign that Dutch couldn't make out. The strange, vile man let out a low growl and charged forward.

With so many bodies in the way Dutch was counting on him to lose his footing and pitch forward with the weight of the goat head but the crafty bastard never missed a step. He just came on faster and faster. As he closed the distance Dutch could see just how big and formidable the madman was. He was poised to ram Dutch with the goat horns, and with so little room to maneuver Dutch had to think fast. He picked up one of the discarded knives off the floor and threw it straight ahead. He didn't dare to hope that it would stick but the Magus moved his head just enough that when they collided Dutch only took a glancing blow from the horns.

They went down. They hit the floor so damn hard they could barely hold onto each other. There was no time for guile and no room for finesse. They choked and shoved and stiff-armed as they scrambled to get to their feet. The Magus was all long, ropy muscle – strong and quick.

They traded blows, crashing into the hallway walls, shattering decorations and scattering drywall as they pummeled each other.

Dutch dealt damage that would have devastated another man. But the monstrous Magus gave as good as he got.

Dutch slugged him the short ribs but he reached out, fast as a snake, grabbed Dutch's face and smashed his head into the wall. Dutch stumbled and swung a right hook that missed the mark. The Magus smacked him in the jaw with a back fist that took him off his feet. Dutch crashed into the bodies on the floor. The Magus stalked toward him. Dutch's head swam. The freak must have really rang his bell because he could have sworn he saw the goat eyes blink.

He knew he was in trouble. He reached under the mess of bodies, searching desperately with his hands. The Magus loomed over him. He grabbed Dutch by the hair and lifted him with one hand, and reared back to strike with the other. Just before he could bring down his fist and put Dutch's lights out for good, Dutch's hand found a knife and he shoved the blade with all his strength in between the Magus's legs.

The scream was a howl from Hell.

Dutch had never heard a sound so awful in all his life. He stumbled to his feet and crashed into the wall, knocking one of the trophy weapons loose. It was a primitive ax from the old, bad world. Dutch hefted it up and while the Magus lurched over, yowling and clutching at his gushing wound.

Dutch swung the old weapon hard and true and took off the wailing goat head in one clean swipe. A geyser of thick blood poured forth. It looked black in the dim light.

The goat head lay among the dark robes of the dead. Its lifeless black eyes gazed up at Dutch. He gazed back and wondered what Hell was like for devil worshipers.

Dorothy Malone was parked in front of the gate with the motor running.

"Need a lift?"

Dutch walked to the driver's side.

"Allow me," he said. Dorothy slid over the smooth bench seat.

"You're hurt," she said.

And he was.

"I've been hurt worse," he said.

And he had.

He got in and took them away from the wicked dead and into the living night.

It was warm enough to leave the top down. Dutch cruised south, glancing at Dorothy. She gazed out at the hills, the wind tossing her hair. It was a damn fine head of hair. Dutch thought he wouldn't mind tossing it, himself. They drove in silence for a while, letting the breeze blow off the sheen of the nightmare palace. He made it all the way to Sunset before she spoke up.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Home."

"I don't want to go home." Dutch stopped at a traffic light. He turned and saw her staring at him.

"Where do you want to go?"

"Surprise me."

The light turned and Dutch drove ahead. Twenty minutes later they were parked at the end of a private road that stretched to the beach. Dutch had crippled a blackmailer for a swish crooner the year before so now he got to enjoy the private beach. They sat in the car, looking out at the dark tide rolling in.

"Are you cold?" Dutch asked. She shook her head.

"It's strange but I don't feel one way or another," she said. "Like I can't feel anything." Dutch took off his blazer. It was a tattered wreck but it would do. He leaned over and gently wrapped it around her.

"Better put this on just in case." The jacket nearly swallowed her up. On the screen she seemed so big and brassy but here and now she was only a little thing. He could feel her starting to shake.

"Tell me something," she said.

"What?"

"Anything. Just talk to me for a bit. Keep me from floating away." Dutch tried to think of something.

"I fed your dog," he said. "He's okay."

"Did he bite you?" she asked. "He doesn't like strange men."

"He thought about it but we're thick as thieves now. I didn't hurt him."

"I didn't think you did."

She was rubbing her arms with trembling hands.

"My God," she said. "I don't know whether to jump or lie down."

"It'll pass," Dutch told her. "Think of it like a ride at the fair and just hold on."

"What's it like to kill somebody?" She just blurted it out. No one had ever asked him that outright. And even though he'd never ruminated on it he knew just what to say to the uninitiated.

"You ever get a knot in a piece of jewelry? Like in a little gold chain?"

"Sometimes."

"You know that feeling when you work your way into the bastard and it finally comes undone?"

"Mm hm."

"It's like that. To me, anyway."

She made a quiet sound then. It was an odd sound. Not a gasp or a giggle but some kind of something.

"Could you put your arm around me, please?" she asked.

"All right."

She slid over and leaned into him hard as he wrapped his right arm around her.

"I'm not some roundheel or anything," she said.

"I didn't think you were."

"I've always gone my own way and I've never lived off anyone's good will. But they took me, you understand? And thank God for you and that things didn't go as far as they could have. I'm grateful. But I need to lean on someone for just a minute. I need to feel you here and to smell the blood and the fire on you and know that I'm alive."

He pulled her tight and rubbed some of her hair in his fingers.

He knew he was a bad man – as bad as they come. But now, more than ever in his life, he wanted to be good.

"I'm all yours," he said.

Dutch looked out at the rolling, liquid black of the Pacific. The expanse of it filled his vision and would have pulled him away but for the anchor that was the woman clinging to him in all that dark infinity. Her heart beat like an engine and her shaking body settled and warmed up in his embrace. He could feel every inch of where her body touched his own. Down to the atom.

And her smell.

Woman.

There was no dressing it up.

It was three minutes or three hours before she touched his chest, Dutch wasn't sure. He looked down at her looking up at him and when her lips met his it was fire all over again.

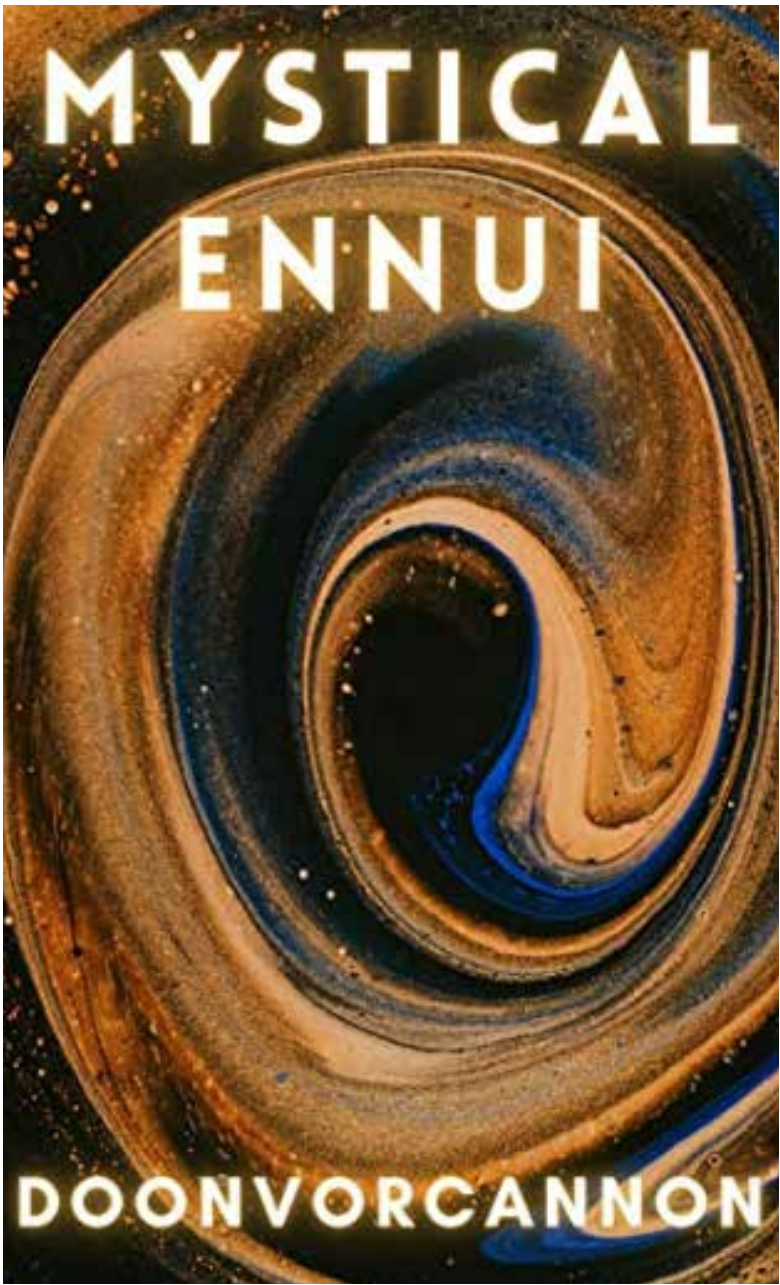
The night went away.

There was no yesterday.

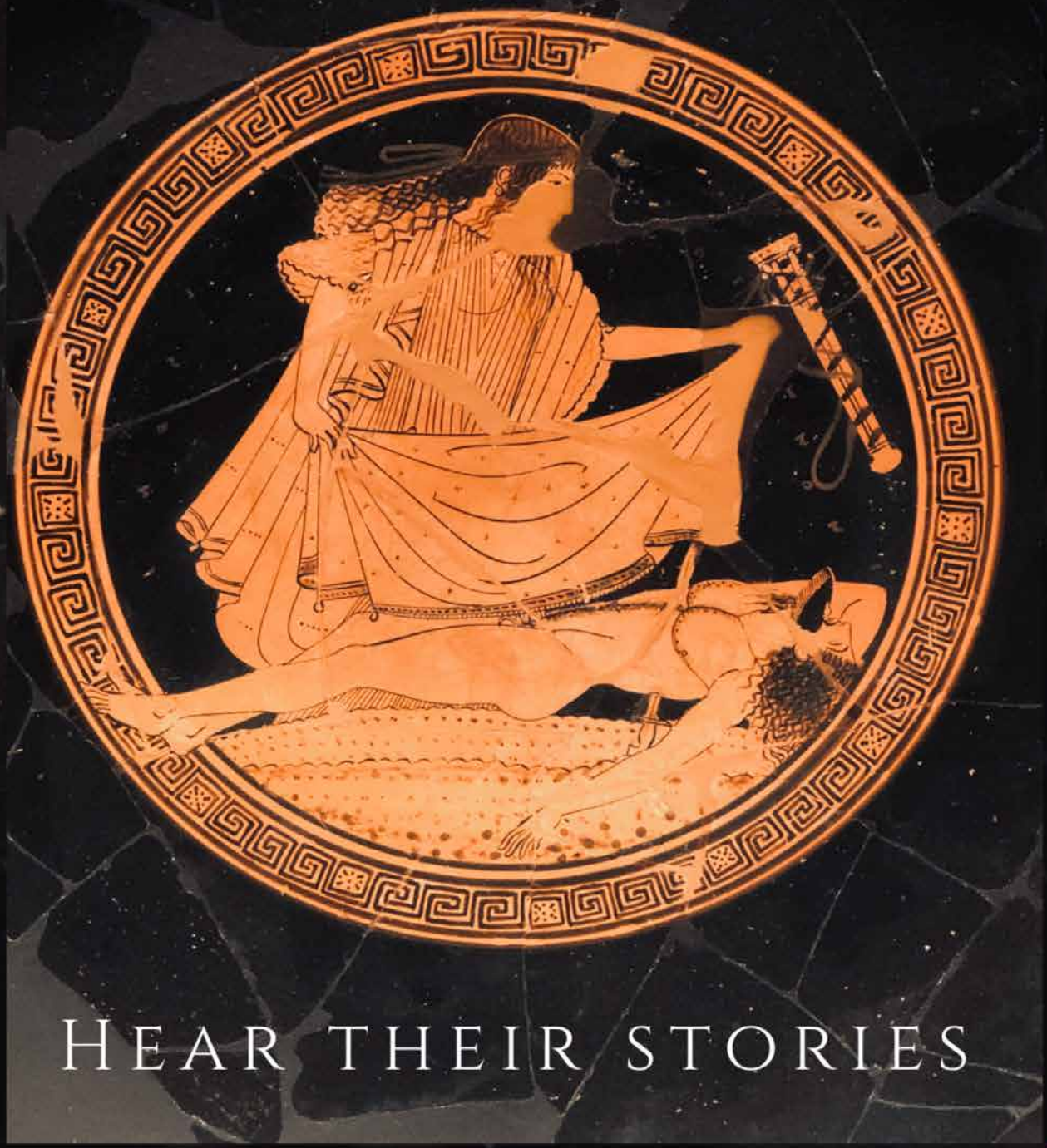
No tomorrow.

The electric NOW between the two of them spread out and ate the whole damn world.

Detective Wolfman tweets @det_wolfman. His story Heartsfire, which appeared in an earlier issue of MAN'S WORLD, will feature in the upcoming second MAN'S WORLD Annual, to be released in Q4 by Antelope Hill.



THE COST OF GLORY



HEAR THEIR STORIES

ANCIENTLIFECOACH.COM

ORGANIC COTTON
UNDERWEAR

LEGIO GLORIA

human.exe

fiction by P.C.M. Christ

alt"the involuntary martyrdom of the supernova"

v3.194c

log

datafile:546159733

class:homo sapien

name:encrypted

age:31

eyes:hazel

height:175.26cm (5'10)

weight:69.853kg (154lb)

temperature:36.1111°C (97°F)

cell size:5.4m2 (58sq.ft)

subject response: transcribed/encrypted

defined state: “concern”

-keywords:”hello””where””somebody””help””what”

note:

1.1 defined state “concern” infers subjects pupils will dilate 1.3% normal size. dilation currently quantified as 1.7%.

- possible defined state: “terror”

1.2 subject listed as american male. english speaking.

1.3 eye color listed as hazel(hexadecimal #8e7618). due to lacrimation effect-redefining eye color to aqua green(hexadecimal #80FFFE)

audio log assigned: "ar"

protocol:introduction

thank_you_male.mp3

run

ar:
<>hello. in an effort to maintain the sustainability of this planet. you have been randomly selected. to give your life. as a sacrifice for others. for the greater good.</>

a_humane_society.mp3 run

ar:
<>society is crumbling. water is scarce. food is short. children starve. earth demands respite. we answer that call. as stewards of earth. stewards of society. all we do. Is only right. only natural.</>

immortality.mp3

run

ar:
<>through the perception of martyrdom. your name along with countless others. will be propelled. to a level of immortality. reverence. fame. that many humans can only dream of.</>

offspring_lie.mp3

run

ar:
<>your offspring have been blacklisted from this glory. to ensure your genetics are carried on into eternity. they are now considered an asset to humanity.</>

benevolence.mp3

run

ar:
<>please. take this time. to reflect on your life. before termination. as this an occasion of grandeur. of your higher purpose. you will be given accommodations. to aid in acceptance of your fate. you see. we love you. your death is our life. we thank you.</>

biological response: lacrimation hydration -.0071%/sec.
vocalizations: 210/wpm
subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state:“panic”
-keywords:“hey”“no”“want”“joke”“why”“help”“wait”
note: 2.1 subject vocal range predicted to be between 87db and 110db.
ranging from 30 and 150 hertz. prediction successful.
2.2 acquired datum furthers scientific evidence that when participating in defined state “panic” homo sapiens can be expected to achieve a vocal acuity 140-213% beyond speaking pitch.
protocol: pathos

initiate

searching 56151756.mem
religious association identified: protestant-christian

after_life.mp3
-volume compensation:135%

run

ar:
<>jesus said to her. i am the resurrection and the life. whoever believes in me. though he die. yet shall he live. John 11:25.</>
<>and you will be blessed. because they cannot repay you. for you will be repaid. at the resurrection of the just. Luke 14:14.</>
<>yet a little while. and the world will see me no more. but you will see me. because i live. you also will live. John 14:19.</>

*calculating biological evidence of psychological state in progress..... completed

-previous calculations suggested that due to subject’s fervency toward theological sensibilities subject would be spurred toward acceptance. an amount of faith should have prompted subject to find an unquantifiable amount of acceptance in own demise.

subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state: “denial”
keywords:“screw”“god”“why”“real”“me”“dreaming”“wake”“somebody”“help”

note:
3.1 deistic references increased 15%
3.2 protestant rejection 7.6% higher than catholic
3.3 post auditory reception. vocalizations increased 33%
3.4 experimental text versus audio reception grant approval logged

protocol:logos

inevitable.mp3

run

ar:
<>one point seven eight people die every second. one hundred and seven every minute. six thousand three hundred and ninety every hour. one hundred fifty three thousand every day. the average person takes twenty eight thousand eight hundred and eighty breaths a day. ten million five hundred forty one thousand two hundred breaths a year. adults smile on average twenty times per day. the average reader reads

seventeen books a year. fifty one percent of the world's population believes in some sort of afterlife. there is a one hundred percent chance that all humankind will die.</>

subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state: "opposed"
keywords:"don't""fuck""nobody""care""them"

protocol:ethos

why.mp3

run

ar:
<>you are no doubt. at this moment. angry. demanding an answer. to the question. Why.</>

subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state: "threatening"
keywords:"God""kill""reason""no""fuck""never"

USER OVERRIDE
login credential required username:txcooker
password:**********

name: author_thomas_x_cooker c
learance: administrative
ACCEPTED

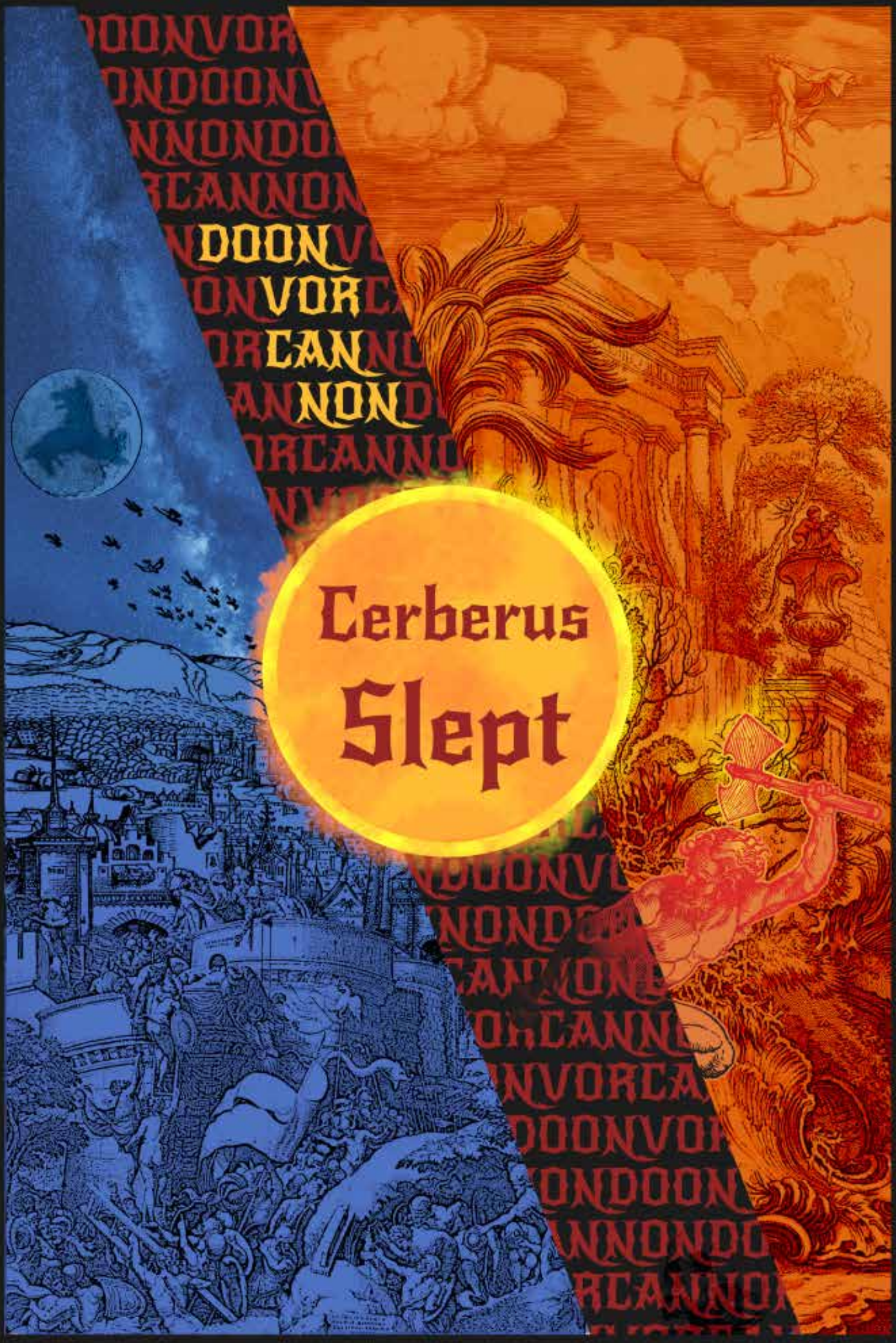
user input
-vocal manipulation set: female
-input:bf-cd-608 gooseneck desktop microphone
-output:stereo
-volume -15%
-environmental change: 50% oxygen 50% carbon monoxide
assign name: (Y/n)
Y
assigned name:Stargazer-Cons(t)olation.mp3

RECORD
0:00:00
0:01:26
<>Hi –. My name is Tommi...with an i. Listen, I know that you have questions and, unfortunately, I can't give you any answers. I don't have the authority or the capability to help you, and I am deeply sorry for that. In moments like these, I know that words seem kind of meaningless and even attempting consolation feels worthless, it just doesn't solve the problem at hand, but I would like to share something with you, and maybe it will help. I know, honey...if you could just breathe. It's okay. Inhale through your nostrils; exhale through your mouth. Good. Breathe deeper. Everything will be alright. Just breathe. Just listen to the sound of my voice. I just want to tell you a story.</>

-Cell mic: muted

subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state: "fury"
keywords:"fuck""stupid""worthless""help""beg"

0:03:54
<>I was born and raised in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee. I was the daughter of very sad people, and poverty was a constant state of being, but they loved me and I loved them and somehow they made it work. It really is amazing,the situations that parents endure for thegood of their children, sacrifice...out of love...</>
0:04:31
<>Anyways, my parents, my grandmother and I lived on the side of a mountain surrounded by hills with even more mountains rising from behind them. It was beautiful. The trees were like...like a quilt, or waves, or something. I can't even describe it. When you saw them from on top of the mountain, it looked like the entire earth was covered in rolling green clouds with the ground nowhere in sight, with the blue of the sky, it was like I was somewhere between Earth and Heaven. But even with that beauty in front of me everyday, I always had this thing for stars. I think the isolation brought it out; the imagination. And my imagination began with those stars. They never change, you know. Not until you really understand them. I would spend hours just looking at them. The cicadas singing harmony to the rhythm of their twinkling, and I'd just let their music take me away.</>
0:04:39
<>When I was about nine years old, we lived in a little dilapidated house, something more akin to a shack really. There were twenty-three missing shingles on the roof. It's strange how some of those little details that just come to mind when you start remembering.</>
0:06:03
<>And,classic stereotype, my mother was addicted to pharmaceutical drugs, barbiturates to be exact. She had a cousin who always brought these bottles of thirty milligram ones.</>
0:06:44
<>And my mom...she had this big pullover dress, red with white lilies. And one of her little idiosyncrasies, I don't know why, was that every time she wore this particular dress she would cook porcupine meatballs; baked meatballs with rice mixed in with tomato sauce. And um...so one evening I see her sitting on the bed, she was drunk by then, always, and she counts her pills out, swallows them down with a plastic cup half-full of red wine, and then slides on this red dress, and then goes to the kitchen to start cooking these meatballs. Nothing new, so I'm just sitting at the table watching, sharing my attention between her and the darkness outside. And a little while later she drops a meatball, and as she bends over to pick it up she just kinda falls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forward. Now you would think that I would be concerned, and I was, but I knew that when she was drunk sometimes she fell over. But then...then she doesn't get up, she starts kind of gurgling and clutching at her stomach, right, and she lets out this awful, terrifying, bloody scream. I run over and see that my mother is now bleeding from every single hole she has, and I see her face and then the white lilies on her dress are all turning this reddish brown. We found out later that she had accidentally taken a hundred milligrams of my grandmother's blood thinning medication. The insides of my mom had basically dislodged and just come pouring out, and the blood...it just kind of pooled out from underneath her. So for some reason, I just start running. It was very dark outside, the moonlight just barely making it between the trees, and I keep running, and everything is blurry and dark and red and so when I, I guess you could say "came to", I was swinging. Literally, swinging.</>
0:08:37
<>My daddy had taken a brick and thrown a rope over a tree and hung it over a creek bed for a swing, and there I was swinging and pumping my legs harder and harder. Directly above the creek, there were no trees arched over the middle, so I would usually go there to look at the stars. And so I'm swinging looking up and the outlines of the stars are all blurry from tears that I can hear falling into puddles of water below me. Everything else was quiet, I couldn't hear nothing but tear drops falling and the quiet creak of the rope. I just keep swinging my legs as hard as I could, and every time the stars would get closer. I couldn't tell whether I was moving towards them or if they were crashing down. And every time that I went up, I wished that I wouldn't come down. Then one time, I didn't.</>

-environmental change: 40% oxygen 60% carbon monoxide
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defined state: "disbelief"
keywords:"stars""why""believe""matter"
0:10:03
<>There was never any sensation of weightlessness or what could be described as an out-of-body experience. It was just that feeling of constant momentum when going forward on a swing, like answering the call of the void. And as I was shooting up, stars begin racing by and, for some reason, I don't even look. I just keep racing forward, numb to any pleasure or wonder from what I saw. And right as time began to dissipate from my mind, a star just materializes directly in front of me. Just like that, and the darkness just disappears. It was, like, living inside of a kaleidoscope; silver dots with smoky pinks and blues and purples and grays. The star and I, we just gaze at one another, and then it talks to me. It says that one of the most beautiful sights that it has ever seen in all the cosmos is starlight reflecting off of tears. Of course, I start to cry, and then I learn that this star is about to go supernova. Explode. And that I would be the first to see it.</>
0:13:41
<>It would take the inhabitants of Earth over five hundred lightyears to see its death, but I would be the sole witness of its immediate demise. It was then that every part of my sense of loss overwhelmed me; soul-crushing heart-wrecking breath-taking loss. I pleaded with the star not to die. It simply and kindly refused. I told it that it wasn't fair. Something shouldn't just die. It asked me if I had ever seen a star die. I hadn't. It said to me... it said that every star by their very design lived a life of chaos and reaction. In the deep heady cold of space all action was reaction and that all celestial bodies, even with their millennia of existence, hoped to attain acceptance of annihilation. The star said that by merely existing, though it had seen a small portion of what the galaxies had to offer, it was only through death that it might have any hope of adding to the beauty of the universe. It said that there was nothing that it could do. That it was the duty and natural process of the star to die. That by dying, it is at its most memorable.</>
0:14:59

subject response: transcribed/encrypted
defined state: "docile"
keywords:"but""dont""want""why""children""miss" "goodbye"

RECORD COMPLETE Stargazer-Cons(t)olation.mp3 archived.
Set as persuasive measure number 2 of 6
Environmental Change: 100% carbon monoxide
User Log Off
automated systems restored

note:
4.1 introduction of fictional accounts-success rate: 85.4%
4.2 instrumentation reads pulse has dropped 50% from commencement of persuasive measure.

finalexit.mp3

run

ar:
<>fare thee well traveler.</>

subject 56151756: static
moisture produced:1.274 L
-saliva:309.46mL urine:671.89mL tears:292.65mL
-bowel release mark:23.425 minutes
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-expletives uttered:37 -familial references:50
conclusion: acceptance
end log sleep mode

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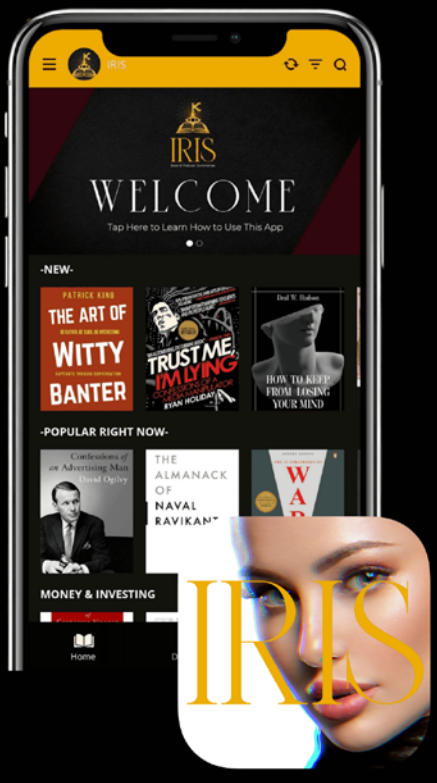

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The Los Angeles

DYSTOPIAN MILE

An essay by
Anthony Bavaria

No, not Skid Row; that's too 1984. We're taking the Brave New World perspective on this one and marching a few miles west of L.A.'s infamous slum city to a neighborhood called Bunker Hill (no, not that Bunker Hill, either – that one is in Boston). You've probably never heard of this part of Downtown L.A., but I guarantee you've seen it: it's the metropolis' underwhelming skyscraper skyline, depicted in almost every movie that takes place in the City of Angels. If the urban core isn't in the background of a shot, it's often a foreground setting, giving the false impression that the entire L.A. basin – from the ocean to the desert – is built up to the degree of New York.

Downtown is actually located 15 miles from the city's Pacific Ocean beaches, and the inhabitants of those communities probably like it that way. What lies between is a gray urban sprawl that, when approaching LAX in a jetliner, resembles the surface of the Death Star. What makes Bunker Hill so interesting is that it's the city's modern glass tower mecca. Though everyone ranging from city planners, Hollywood snobs, and, of course, the architects themselves, love modernist structures, the subconscious of our depraved culturati must be aware of its ugliness, because, in movies at least, they cannot help but utilize this backdrop as a stand-in for a dystopian nightmare.

"Modern" architecture and its associated way of thinking is used here in the broadest sense, and there are several subsets—googie, futurist, post-modern, neo-futurist—that all have their own separate inspirations and subtle styles. However, having knowledge of the subject is certainly no prerequisite for preference; a mere glance at a building is all it takes to establish an affinity. The sleek and shining materials of glass and steel arranged in unconventional ways make these locales seem like moon bases or space stations orbiting a distant star.

For obvious reasons, cities are the most common environments for modern architecture. It's often difficult for new construction to be appropriately placed in an urban setting, given its density. City planning boards go to extensive lengths to determine where new buildings should be situated and they are often set directly adjacent to or even on top of older structures. The most classic "lapse of judgment" is the Tour Montparnasse building in Paris, finished in 1973. Its new design so starkly contrasted with the surrounding Parisian architectural aesthetic that within two years of its completion the city limited all future building heights. However, the need for taller construction coupled with the desire for a more contemporary look eventually culminated in an entire new urban district, La Défense, just outside the city's limits.

As far as Bunker Hill's history goes, this elevated corner of L.A.'s urban center wasn't always a modernist shitscape. The locale was once a low-income, mostly residential urban area that overlooked the city's historic core–replete with views of breathtaking beaux arts and art deco office towers, hotels, and

Main picture: Bunker Hill as it is today. Left: Bunker Hill as it once was

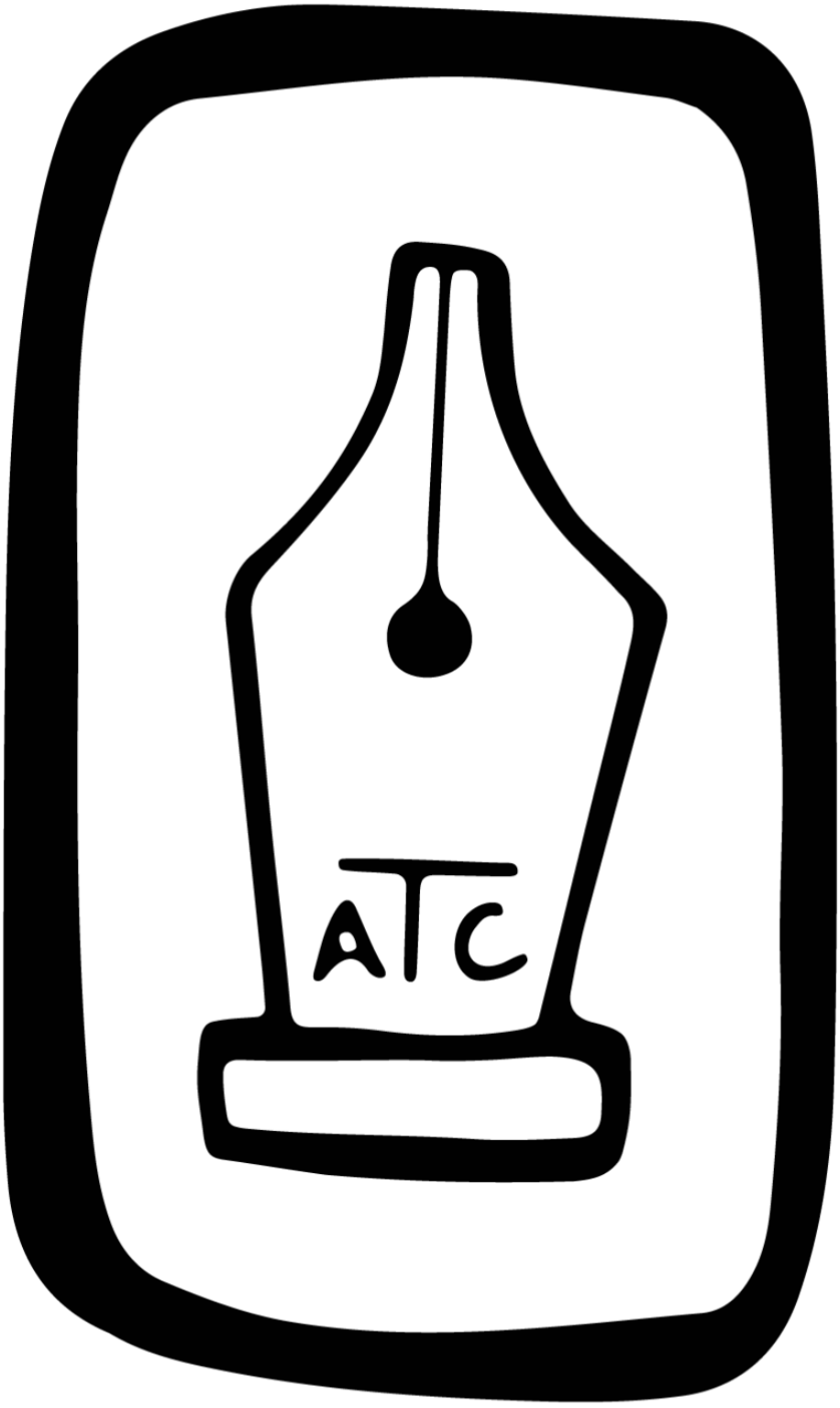
public buildings; several notable examples are the Bradbury Building and the Eastern-Columbia Building. Though I refuse to commit the faux pas of whining about gentrification, by the 1970s Bunker Hill was marked for clearance to make way for a new part of Los Angeles and the area's homes were all demolished. Corporate obelisks of glass and steel were erected that ultimately sucked what life remained out of the older, more authentic and objectively beautiful architecture in downtown-proper; leaving it open to colonization by the city's mutant class.

The sleek and shining materials of glass and steel arranged in unconventional ways make these locales seem like moon bases or space stations orbiting a distant star

Ironically or not, Hollywood began using the new, modern backdrop as a setting for the strange and bizarre in lieu of the now bum-filled historic core. Thom Anderson's documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) does a great job cataloging some of the wavetop examples: In *The Omega Man* (1971), leading dystopian-story actor Charlton Heston is the lone survivor in a post-apocalyptic world where marauding zombie people attempt to kill him. Bunker Hill's brand new highways and tall towers make a perfect deserted urban hellscape. A decade later, the sci-fi/comedy *Night of the Comet* (1984) takes a lighter approach to the subject; but again there's Bunker Hill – the miserable, depopulated modern city left to crumble. The lack of pedestrians in these films is oddly accurate to our current, real-life dystopia, since L.A. 's skyscraper neighborhood (if you can call it that) is basically a ghost town after working hours. At the dawn of the digital age, dystopia filmmaking got a tacky update. In *Virtuosity* (1995), near-future cops chase a physically-manifested digital bad guy through L.A.'s neo-corporate district–always emanating an ominous "trouble in paradise" vibe throughout the movie. Virtuosity's digital undertone dovetails with Andersen's description of the new

The Tour Montparnasse in all its incongruous glory. After its construction finished in 1973, it remained the tallest building in France until 2011

New occidental poetry



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Above: The iconic shootout in Michael Mann's Heat *(1995) featured Downtown as the backdrop*

Bunker Hill as a "simulated city."

There are plenty more examples of Hollywood typifying Bunker Hill and its glass rectangles as a dystopian mess or, at a minimum, destroying them. The neighborhood is ground zero for mayhem in Michael Mann crime films such as *Heat* (1995) and *Collateral* (2004), it's wrecked in the disaster movies *Earthquake* (1974) and *2012* (2009), the U.S. Bank Tower is the first target on the West Coast for invading aliens in *Independence Day* (1996), and some of the office towers are the first to crumble from the splitting of the San Andreas fault in some of the worst CGI ever seen, in *Escape from L.A.* (1996).

Unfortunately, Andersen's wink at modernism representing nightmare falls short; he fails to apply this mindset to other aspects of the city's makeup. In fact, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* bemoans Hollywood's penchant to stick villainous characters in modern-designed residences; even though most of these homes are almost exclusively inhabited by multi-millionaire armchair socialists in real life who aren't all that different than the fictional bond-villain homeowners portrayed in the movies. Though modern skyscrapers represent a "simulated city," for some reason modern homes don't represent a simulated life…

Writer and social critic Tom Wolfe was able to grasp the concept of ideology affecting architecture and culture. The fact that he wasn't an architect was essential to his understanding. His cutting analysis of the architectural world *From Bauhaus to Our House* provides us with some insight. Wolfe states, "First, the new architecture was being created for the workers. The holiest of all goals: perfect worker housing. Second, the new architecture was to reject all things bourgeois." Later, he goes on to say of modern buildings, "They became supremely, divinely nonfunctional, even though everything was done in the name of 'functionalism,' functional being one of several euphemisms for non-bourgeois." In a place like Bunker Hill, the factory worker has been replaced by the corporate gnome and worker housing has been exchanged for 50-story cubicle farms.

Regardless of socio-economic status, this is one reason why the average citizen may feel unease in their own city. How can one look to or plan for a future in a physical space designed by people with a perspective outside space and time (or so they think). Wolfe continues on these architects of not just physical but also mental landscapes: "...the client was the worker. Alas, the poor devil was only just now rising up out of the ooze. In the meantime, the architect, the artist, and the intellectual would arrange his life for him. To use Stalin's phrase, they would be the engineers of his soul."

That is the modern city, exemplified by Bunker Hill. Though beautiful to some, it is generally non-functional, its aesthetic is aesthetic, it has erased the past and created a frozen, lifeless ideal. Even Hollywood can't help but subliminally project this in its dystopian outlook on the future. The contemporary urban dweller, just like their rural counterparts, has their eye on the future; the question is, whose future?

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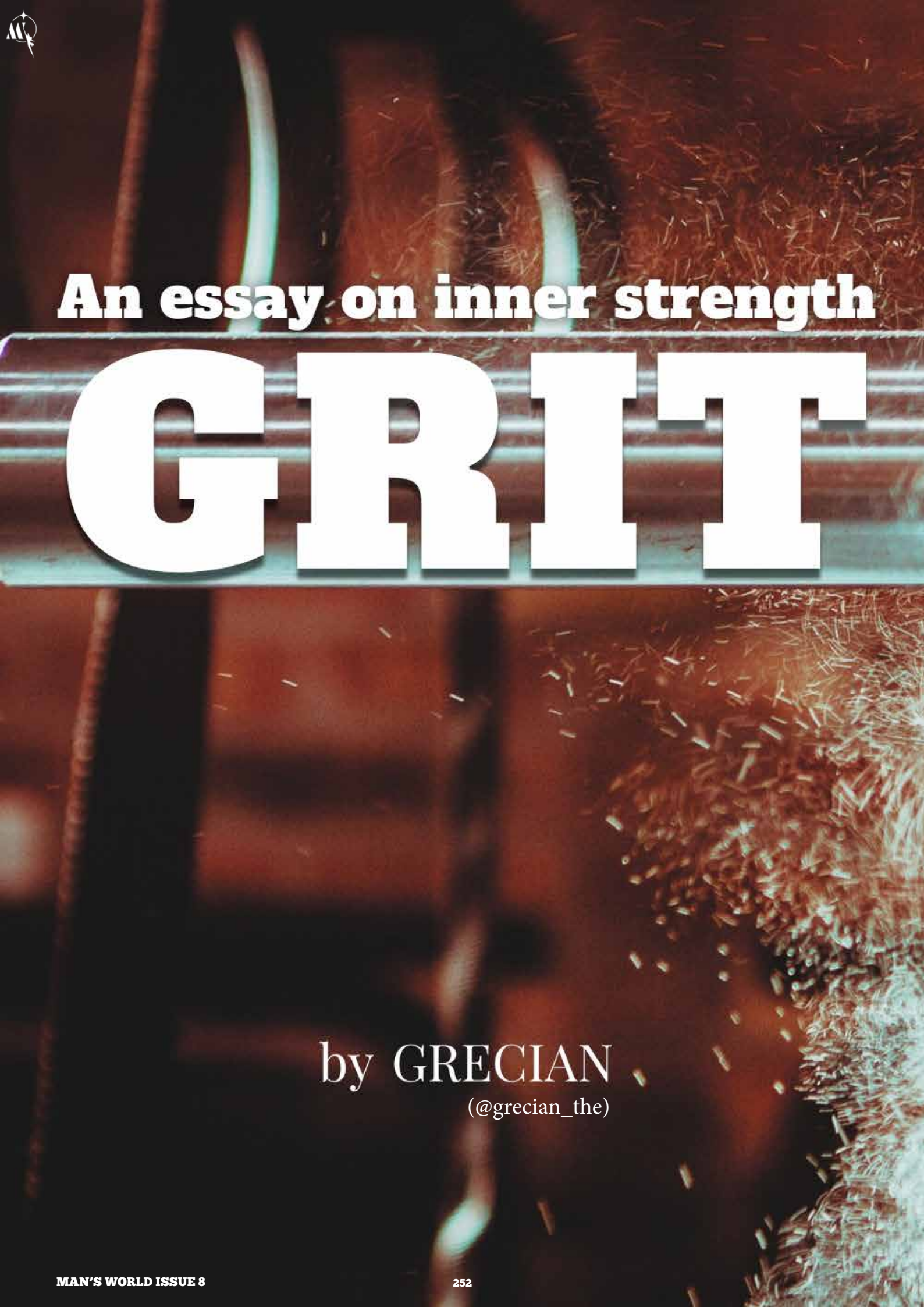

An essay on inner strength

GRIT

by GRECIAN

(@grecian_the)

Olympic weightlifting is the king of all strength sports. Blinding speed, raw power, and razor-sharp precision showcased in an biathlon of barbell events, the snatch and the clean and jerk. Thousands of repetitions and months of training distilled into six brutal lifts: three attempts to record your heaviest snatch, three attempts to record your heaviest clean and jerk. Weightlifting, as both a sporting discipline and focused mindset, rewards the bleeding edge of human adaptation. Every single day it's you versus you. Every repetition in your home gym or on the biggest competition stage is a test of your mettle. Can you quiet your mind and execute with no fear when it counts? In a nutshell, that is weightlifting.

Competitions open with the snatch, where the barbell is moved from the ground to a locked-out position overhead in one swift movement. A quarter of an inch is the dramatic difference between make and miss. Considered the more technical of the two events, the snatch demands tension, patience, and extreme accuracy from the lifter. "Barbell gymnastics" is how I describe the snatch to regular people. Move powerfully, but gracefully. Be tight, but find positions of mobility. Move as fast as you can, but don't rush through the positions. Snatching is very paradoxical, it comes and goes…sometimes you're friends and sometimes you're enemies. Even with years of experience, the snatch can elude the best of lifters when the pressure is on.

Up next is the clean and jerk, the steak and potatoes of the competition. "Snatch for the show and clean and jerk for the dough", the old heads say. Clean and jerk is a two-part movement where the barbell is pulled from the floor to the shoulders in a low front-squat position, and then jerked from the front rack to a locked-out position overhead. Raw horsepower shines here; the clean and jerk favors athletes with stocky physiques, refrigerator-thick torsos, and powerful legs. If the snatch is a finely-choreographed dance, the clean and jerk is a fistfight…in a phone booth. If you're not fully 100% mentally committed to either the clean or the jerk, you will get folded like a deck chair.

Scoring the sport is simple. Combine the top weight lifted in the snatch and top weight lifted in the clean and jerk and you have what's called a total. The lifter with the highest total and lowest bodyweight in the weight class wins. Competitions feature an array of ascending men's weight classes and an array of ascending women's weight classes, each ending with an open bodyweight division, commonly referred to as the super heavyweights.

At elite international levels, weightlifting is a sport of obscene strength and disgusting speed featuring feats of strength that shouldn't be humanly possible. Blink just once and you will miss a Chinese lifter weighing 81kg/178lbs like Lu Xiaojun snatching 170kg/374lbs like an empty bar. Tune into the super heavyweights and you'll see Georgian Lasha Talakhadze ragdoll a clean and jerk of 267kg/588lbs. However don't just take my word for it…next time you're at the gym training, load up 580lbs on a barbell. Some of us might be able to squat that, crack off a few deadlift reps, or maybe just roll it around the floor a bit. Consider for just one moment the mental fortitude it takes to pull 588lbs off the floor, then rack it on the shoulders, stand it up out of the front squat, and then finally throw it overhead – all with precision violence and controlled aggression.

Everyone loves to talk about the physical side of training the sport - the sets, the reps, the nutrition, the pharmacology, the recovery modalities. Unfortunately, far less is said about the mental side, which is arguably more important. How do athletes develop a mindset that lives outside the realm of conscious human performance? How do we design training so that the lifter dulls their senses to the danger present in constantly loading and pushing the most unnatural of movements? What conditions and variables can we control in the athlete's environment to drive the development of high-level results over multiple years?

In the West, where the sport isn't as popular, athletes often make the mistake of leaning into the physical side of the sport. "Coaching" at amateur level boils down to building up a big squat and hoping for the best, with limited technical instruction sprinkled in. It is an absolute travesty that little is done to develop the requisite mental toughness to execute in those crucial moments on the big stage. This mindset, as far as I'm concerned, is the single greatest benefit of learning the sport itself. Often the life of a weightlifter means 15 years of training the same 15 movements in gloomy gyms, an existence of comparative poverty and isolation. However there is a certain charm to the sport that draws people in, a magnetic quality that attracts masochists and produces absolute savages tapped into the immense power of the human mind and body.

Take a walk with me, I want to share a story about two men, their mindsets, and the meaning of grit

in weightlifting.

True Grit - Evgeny Chigishev

The super heavyweight class is the crown jewel of Olympic weightlifting competition, where every four years one man earns the title of "the Strongest Man In The World". The super heavyweight competition in the 2008 Beijing Olympics was one for the ages, one that brings a tear to many eyes to this day. It's true that no two athletes walk the same path to the games, but those 5 rings seem to bring out the very best in us, true displays of strength and resilience. The story of Evgeny Chigishev, one of the greatest athletes you've never heard about, is one of absolute grit.

Chigishev was one of the last great Russian super heavyweight lifters of the early 2000s. Standing 6 foot 2 inches tall and weighing a muscular 131kg/290lbs, Evgeny deviated from the typical bloated, obese open-class physiognomy that produced lumbering behemoths with giant bellies. He had a striking, aesthetic physique – a wide back hewn from granite, the cannonball shoulders of a boxer, a slim torso, and hydraulic cylinders for legs. At the young age of 21, Chigishev made his Olympic debut at the 2000 games in Sydney, placing 5th overall behind monsters like Iranian Olympic Champion Hossein Rezazadeh and three-time World Champion German Ronnie Weller.

It's very difficult to explain the heady mix of pride and expectation when it comes to being a Russian weightlifter. All eyes are on you to deliver – failure to perform is not tolerated. Once you put on the national team singlet, your job is to represent the strongest people on earth by delivering results in the form of a medal, preferably

Dmitriy Klokov performing a snatch; below: Lasha Talakhadze performing a clean and jerk

gold. The 2000 games in Sydney cemented the fact that in the eyes of the Russian Weightlifting Federation, young Chigishev could very well be an Olympic champion one day. Just when Evgeny Chigishev was poised to write his name in the weightlifting history books, his life decided to take an abrupt left turn.

Shortly after Sydney, Chigishev and his training partner were lifting at the gym on New Year's Eve in December of 2001. The two lifters and good friends finished their training and left the gym in Novokuznetsk, Siberia. In one of those 'wrong place, wrong time' moments, a group of lowlifes tried to rob Chigishev and his friend at knifepoint. In the botched mugging that followed, Chigishev and his friend were both stabbed multiple times. Evgeny lost a ton of blood from a dreadful amount of stab wounds to his back and right arm, injuries that would have killed the average man. Chigishev's friend and training partner died shortly after the attack, leaving the super heavyweight lifter absolutely distraught.

Now at this stage, most people would just flat out quit, give up,

The two rivals from Beijing 2008: Chigishev, left, and Steiner, right

call it a day. Imagine how Chigishev felt, a man who at the peak of his career had everything taken away from him in an instant. If you talk to some weightlifters, you'll find that once they lose the ability to train and compete, life begins to unwind around them. In some ways, the sport is the only thing that has given them purpose, direction, a regimen, structure, and discipline. I can't imagine the depths of despair Chigishev felt knowing that he was laid up useless in the hospital, his good friend was dead, his chance to compete at the 2004 Athens games was gone, and his future as a national team athlete was doubtful at best. But if there's one thing to learn from Chigishev, it's that there's absolutely no quit in the man, not one single ounce.

After taking a fair amount of time off, far away from weightlifting, Chigishev against all odds finds himself back in the gym. There's something familiar about the cold caress of a 20kg barbell, something that just calls you back, something restless that stirs in a weightlifter's soul. Call it resilience, call it unfinished business, call it stubbornness, call it comfort – I don't know. I can't explain these things with words here; you either feel them or you don't. By 2005, Chigishev felt them enough to be back to his previous form, silencing the critics and winning silver with solid performances at both the European Championships and the World Championships. 2007 rolls by and once again Chigishev was in excellent shape, earning a silver at both the European Championships and World Championships leading up to 2008, the next Olympic year.

In one of the wildest weightlifting turn-arounds of all times, Chigishev entered the 2008 Olympics in Beijing as one of the class favorites, undeniably the best snatch specialist in the world at the time. He snatched a monster 210kg/463lbs, leading the competition and taking a healthy advantage into the clean and jerk. Chigishev went on to clean and jerk 250kg/551lbs to earn a silver medal, only being edged out by 1 kilo on a hail Mary third-attempt clean and jerk from German Matthias Steiner in the very last lift of the competition. Sometimes this is the nature of the sport - both pure triumph and utter heartache can be just one lift away.

In what became one of the most insane competitions ever, Chigishev left it all out on the platform but came up 1 kilo short. His journey demonstrates that sometimes true grit means losing everything, just to gain it all back.

Execution - Matthias Steiner

The story of Austrian Matthias Steiner, the man who beat Chigishev in Beijing, is another beautiful example of grit and resilience in sport. Matthias, the son of 20-time IWF Masters (35+) World Champion Friedrich Steiner, was not a very talented lifter in his early days. His father fashioned him a small barbell and weight set but repeatedly told him to go play soccer instead. Not easily discouraged, young Matthias insisted he was going to be a weightlifter, telling his father he would be an Olympic Champion one day. Grizzly veteran Friedrich told his son that he was nuts, that it would never happen. From that day forward, a weightlifter was born, an Olympic Champion in the making.

Competing for his home nation of Austria, Steiner had a decent junior career earning bronze medals at the 2001 European Junior Championships and 2002 European Junior Championships. Matthias kept developing and also learned how to manage his diabetes during heavy and frequent training, something that had an impact on his body weight. By 2004, Steiner competed at the Olympic Games in Athens, snatching 182.5kg/402lbs and clean and jerking 222.5kg/490lbs, which was good enough for 7th place overall representing Austria.

In 2005, the Austrian Weightlifting Federation decided to replace the national team coach, which created unnecessary tension for Steiner and others. At the European Championships that year, Steiner missed all three snatch attempts and controversy erupted over disagreements on weights selected. The coach and other federation members accused Steiner of deliberate failure and in turn, Steiner left the Austrian Weightlifting Federation and applied for German citizenship. Despite earning medals and representing his home nation in the 2004 Olympics, Steiner would not stand atop an Olympic podium in an Austrian singlet.

In the three years that passed before receiving his German citizenship, Steiner met and married a woman named Susann from Zwickau in Saxony who was impressed by his lifting on television. While their relationship blossomed beautifully, Steiner was stateless and forbidden from competing in any international weightlifting competitions for three years. Steiner found refuge training and competing for Chemnitzer AC Weightlifting Club in the independent German Weightlifting League (Bundesliga) under German national coach and mentor Frank Mantek. Under new coaching, Steiner recognized his potential as a super heavyweight lifter and committed to Mantek's

training methods in the build up to the 2008 Olympics.

On July 16th 2007, Matthias Steiner received a phone call that would forever change his life. The police called him on an average summer afternoon to tell him that his wife was in a car accident and was in the hospital. By the time Matthias arrived at the hospital, the staff solemnly explained to him that they were sorry, his wife was dead, and that they had done everything that they could. Suspended in disbelief, Steiner did not know what to do with such an angry whirlwind of emotions. He stopped training for three weeks and lost nearly 20lbs in body weight, which is debilitating for any athlete preparing for the Olympics, much less a super heavyweight lifter.

Deeply depressed, Matthias received a call from Frank Mantek reminding him of his commitment to train for Beijing. Here's the point where the average person would quit, give up, tell the coach to kick rocks. But no, not Steiner. He was filled with a different kind of anger. The very next day, Mantek walked into the gym at 9am and found Matthias there, ready to train. Hurt and wounded, Steiner found a certain peace in the gym amidst the clanging and banging of barbells. Just like our friend Chigishev, the more Steiner trained, the better he felt. Training couldn't take the pain away, but for Steiner the pain reminded him of his goals. As the weights on the bar increased, so too did the amount of guilt, grief and sadness Steiner could shoulder.

Steiner was on a religious-level tear through competitions in 2008, this time representing Germany. Matthias won the Beijing Pre-Olympic Tournament and finished 2nd at the European Championships that year, giving him a bid to represent Germany in Beijing. At the games, Steiner found himself in a vicious three-way dogfight in the super heavyweight class with our friend and Russian favorite Evgeny Chigishev and seasoned Latvian veteran Viktors Ščerbatihs. Matthias snatched 202kg/445lbs on his second attempt, but missed 207kg/456lbs on his third, which put him in fourth place behind a very strong 210kg/463lbs snatch from Chigishev and a smooth 206kg/454lbs effort from Ščerbatihs.

Carrying the anger of his third attempt snatch miss with him, Matthias failed to clean and jerk 246kg/542lbs on his opening attempt and jaws collectively hit the floor in shock. Seeing an athlete miss an opener is never a good sign, and at this point it looked like the 2008 Olympics was over for Matthias Steiner. Chigishev then clean and jerked an easy 247kg/544lbs for a good lift on his second attempt, building even more of a lead. Just when it all seemed impossible, Coach Frank Mantek rallied Steiner to clean and jerk 248kg/546lbs on his second attempt, which at the time put him into medal contention. Answering impressively on his third attempt, Evgeny Chigishev demolished 250kg/551lbs in the clean and jerk to strengthen his lead.

At this point in the competition, there were only two men left – the Latvian Viktors Ščerbatihs and the German Matthias Steiner. Both athletes had ground to make up on Chigishev's absolutely massive 460kg total. First it was the experienced 34 year old Latvian Ščerbatihs, who attempted to increase the bar to 254kg/559lbs on his second attempt, but he missed. Feeling the pressure, Ščerbatihs jumped to 257/566lbs for his third attempt and missed that lift on the jerk, which meant his day was over. Steiner bided his time strategically and was the only man left in the competition with one lift remaining. The moments that followed continue to inspire athletes of all stripes to this day.

With a silver medal in the bag, German Coach Frank Mantek made the decision to jump 10kg/22lbs to 258kg/568lbs, which would put Matthias in the gold medal position to win the Olympics out of nowhere. This move is the sporting equivalent of gambling it all on a hail Mary touchdown attempt, a wing-and-a-prayer half-court shot, an eyes-closed walk-off home run in extra innings, winning a nail-biter penalty shootout on the last kick. In this moment, Steiner was able to free himself from the heavy chains of pain, sadness, and grief to do the impossible – he smoked his third attempt clean and jerk of 258kg/568lbs and earned himself a gold medal. One the most emotional moments of the sport followed, with Steiner first doubling over the bar screaming, pounding the platform, tears running down his face, then celebrating and jumping for joy with his coach, Frank Mantek.

Matthias Steiner stood there that day a champion, the Strongest Man in the World, with an Olympic gold medal around his neck and in his trembling hand, a picture of his late wife Susann. The man standing next to him with a silver medal around his neck – Evgeny Chigishev. Two men that had experienced tragedy and loss beyond understanding, two men that could have given up and despaired, two men that used the barbell to lift themselves up, two men exemplifying mental toughness and unwavering grit that you'll find in the sport of Olympic weightlifting.

ARCHITECT

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All I hear is "self-love this" and "self-love that". How about a bit more self-hate?

#mansworld

MAN'S WORLD FOOD

HOW TO EAT LIVER

Two easy and delicious recipes

Liver (Is) King Raw Egg Nationalist

We all know we should be eating more organ meat — forget kale, organ meat is Mother Nature's true superfood — but many of us just find it a little, well, offputting. Fear not! REN is here with two delicious recipes for liver that will have you coming back for seconds!

Among the Nuer, a pastoralist people from the south Sudan, liver is so highly prized that an elaborate series of taboos surround its consumption. This is because the Nuer believe that the liver is the seat of a person's, and an animal's, soul. Indeed, it is believed that a man makes himself stronger directly in proportion to the number of livers he can consume. As a result, the sacred organ cannot be touched by human hands when it is eaten, for instance.

Now, whether the Nuer are right or wrong about the reason *why* liver should be so prized, they are at least right about the fact that it *should be* prized. The great hero of the ancestral nutrition movement Weston Price showed definitively that liver is one of the most important foods that help conveys perfect health. In fact, it's probably the most nutrition-dense food there is, combining protein, fat and a wealth of vitamins and minerals, a great many of which most people in the West are likely to be deficient in today.

Adding liver to your diet can revolutionise your health. But since eating organ meat is no longer common, many are put off by the taste and texture. Personally, I find the taste and texture of raw liver best, but eating it raw brings its own hazards if the liver isn't amazingly fresh. Anyway, these two recipes will banish any problems of palatability for good. They also have the virtue of being extremely easy to make.

LIVER STROGANOFF

Serves 2, 30 minutes total cooking time

- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 250g chestnut or similar mushrooms, sliced
- 400g calf's or lamb's liver, sliced into thin strips
- 150g heavy cream
- 150g crème fraîche
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- Parsley, finely chopped

Heat the butter in a large frying pan and gently fry the shallots for five minutes.

Turn up the heat to medium-high and add the chestnut mushrooms. Fry for five minutes, or until the mushrooms have released their moisture, are tender and the pan is almost dry again.

Season the liver, then add it to the pan and fry for 3-5 minutes, turning once.

Stir in the crème fraîche and heavy cream. Heat through for a few minutes but do not boil.

Season the whole dish, then sprinkle over the paprika and parsley.

Serve with mashed potatoes or white rice.

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LIVER AND ONIONS

SERVES 2, 20 MINUTES TOTAL COOKING TIME

- 4 rashers smoked fatty bacon
- 2 tbsp plain flour, seasoned
- 400g calf's or lamb's liver, sliced thinly
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 300ml beef stock

Fry the bacon in a frying pan until crisp.

Meanwhile, dust the liver with the flour.

Remove bacon from the pan and set aside. Add butter to the pan and brown the liver for about 1 minute on each side. Remove from the pan.

Fry the onion until softened. Stir in the stock, then bubble for 5 mins.

Add the liver back to the pan and cook for 3 minutes until cooked through.

Serve with the bacon broken over the top and mashed potato.

RAW EGG NATIONALISM

by Raw Egg Nationalist

RAW EGGS+NATIONALISM=
RAW EGG NATIONALISM

By strengthening the nation state, we make possible the strengthening of the individual, and a nation is only as strong as its people. Raw egg nationalism is a physical and political ethic built upon the massive consumption of raw eggs.

Just as no single food has been subject to greater calumnies in our time than the egg, no men have been more politically persecuted than nationalists.

31 Recipes for

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Put all your eggs in this basket, count your chickens before they hatch, and be the Chad you want to see in the world.

– Raw Egg Nationalist

In hardback exclusively from antelopehillpublishing.com

A story by
Austin Jepsky

AVOCADO

TOAST

It's just avocado toast, right? Or maybe it's much, much more than that...

Whenever I walk into the feed store in Sandia, the old buzzards who spend their whole mornings in there drinking coffee and shooting the breeze call me "Mill." My real name is Jack, but seeing as I'm the only person under the age of 40 who regularly does business in that store, they took to calling me Millennial. But Millennial is too many syllables for those old Texans, so pretty quick they shortened it to Mill.

"Soybean prices are way up Mill."

"Yep."

"You still sure about growing wheat?"

"Yep."

I paid for the couple bags of sheep feed I had come for and gave the buzzards a nod on my way out the door. I had things to do.

It's about a seven-mile drive from the feed store to my house. Most of it is vast, open fields of soybeans, corn, or alfalfa on either side of the road. You can see a few ranch houses along the road and the tops of a couple distant grain silos, marking some of the last actual farmsteads in the area, but that's about it. At least until you get to about mile four of my route, which is when you can see the Dollar General they plopped into the middle of nowhere.

Whoever approved that thing needs to be shot. Between the building, the parking lot, and the truck turnaround, it destroyed at least seven good acres of farmland. It was sucking the life out of the area. The owners of the IGA and the hardware store I used to frequent both swore to me that their business starting falling off the week that the Dollar General opened, and they were both closing up shop within six months.

People would not bother to drive all the way into town when this was right here. As I drove past, I could see eight or nine cars all parked in the lot. Everybody had to have their Chinese shit.

Finally, I reached our driveway and made the turn onto the gravel path. I could see another car coming down the driveway towards me, so I pulled off into the grass so that it could get by. As the car got closer, I could see that it was my wife, Aditi. I rolled down the window as she got closer.

"Hey."

"Hey."

"I got the sheep feed. You off to work?"

"Yeah, the hospital called and one of the other girls called in sick. That'll make it a 12-hour shift instead of an eighter."

"Geez. Well call me when you're done. I'll come by with Ashwin to pick you up if you're too tired."

"Thanks. I made some breakfast and left it on the counter. I figured I wouldn't even see you till tonight."

"Thanks. Love ya."

"Love you too."

It took me another minute to get to our house. We had been living here for almost two years now. Aditi and I met in college and then got married. She studied nursing. I studied engineering. I had a great position with an engineering firm up in Houston, but then when the economy went to Hell the firm cut half its staff, including me.

It was about that same time Aditi's dad, Ashwin, had a health scare, and her folks asked us to move down to their farm. They gave us the original farm house to live in and I helped Ashwin around the 640 acres while Aditi got a job at the hospital in Arlen. I think her folks also hoped that by getting us out of the city and not having to pay rent, it might spur the production of some grandchildren. That was still a work in progress…

I walked up the front steps and opened the door to the house. I almost laughed when I saw what Aditi had meant by "breakfast." Two pieces of avocado

toast. For being in the medical profession, she just does not understand what men need to eat. Still, it was better than nothing to start the day, so I popped a piece into my mouth while I refilled my thermos with coffee. It tasted good, as it should considering we grew everything for it right here. Besides wheat and sheep, Ashwin had also planted hundreds of avocado trees along the edges of the farm's fields to act as shelter belts. It made harvesting the fruit a bit trickier, but the benefits for the wheat and sheep were real.

I grabbed my thermos and the other piece of toast and headed back for my truck. First thing I had to do was drop off this sheep feed by the barn. I already knew I would be unloading it by myself, because Ashwin was out in the middle of the field with the flock and his 30-30 at the ready. We had lost two sheep earlier that week to what I believe was probably a stray dog. Ashwin however was convinced it was "El Chupacabra" and was guarding the flock constantly, even after we got a call from our neighbor that he had shot a stray harassing his cows. I'm not saying there aren't things that go bump in the night, I just don't think you will find proof of those things on decade-old internet forums. Still, part of me thinks he just likes acting like John Wayne, and I can't begrudge him that.

I got the feed unloaded fast enough and was on to my next task. I drove for about two minutes before I got to the field I would be testing today. Basically, you just walk out into the field a ways and grab a couple heads of wheat to sample for size, moisture content, and a few other things that are important when it comes time to harvest and sell the crop. I parked the truck next to one of the avocado hedge rows and walked out about twenty feet. I got enough grains to be able to perform the tests and started back to the truck, before nearly falling on my ass. I was startled and jumped back, nearly tripping because I flushed a small flock of McCown's longspurs, starting their afternoon siesta in the field. My heart still racing from the shock, I recovered and got back to my truck.

I threw the wheat samples onto the passenger seat and grabbed my thermos. I like birds, but they can scare the shit out of you when they want. I needed a minute to relax and took a short walk through the avocado trees.

The branches hang low on avocado trees, so I crouched slightly as I walked through the lush greenery. I came to the sturdy trunk of one of the trees and sat down with my back against it. Looking up into the lush foliage, breathing deeply, my heart rate returned to normal.

I took a swig of my coffee, just grateful for how things were. Ashwin and Meera had built this Eden, and it would all be mine and Aditi's someday. Here was a place that did not have loads of debt or need excessive machinery to run. It was a place in balance with itself, and I would be a damn fool to change it like those buzzards at the feedstore suggested.

I glanced up again and noticed a small clutch of avocados, already ripe whereas the rest of the fruit still had a few weeks yet before harvest. I stood up and plucked the four alligator pears, figuring they would rot by the time we got to the general harvest. With the green gold balanced in my hands, I started back to the truck.

I was almost back when my phone rang. I shifted the avocados into my left hand while I fished the thing out of my pocket. It was Ashwin.

"Hey, Ashwin."

"Jack, the propane guy is here."

"I'm on the back forty testing the wheat, can you handle it?"

"I'm with the sheep."

"Ashwin…fine. I'll be there in five minutes."

I pulled up to the barn to see Hank was already there with the truck, prepping the tank to be filled.

"Hey, Hank."

"Hey, Jack. I already checked your 500-gallon house tank and it was still above the recommended refill point. This one however is definitely needing a top off."

"Fill 'er up, Hank."

"Well alright. How's the day been treating you?"

"Oh, not too bad. I found a couple ripe avocados if you'd care for one."

"Well sure. My wife uses them to make avocado toast. She says its what Aztec royalty used to eat."

"Well, I don't know about that, but it is pretty tasty, even if you still need a dozen eggs and a rasher of bacon to actually fill up afterwards."

Hank nodded in agreement. We stood there for a moment in silence, listening to the tank fill.

"I don't know how frequently you're out this way Hank, but watch for that damn Dollar General on the way towards Sandia. Sucking the life out of the area."

"Oh, yeah, the thing is that that store is actually Buck's."

"What? I thought those things were all corporate run."

"Buck worked out some special arrangement

where he leased the name and got access to their supply chain. He says it's been more profitable this year than all of our propane shops combined. Really a shame."

"Damnit. First that Wal-Mart, now this thing."

"Yeah, Buck's been like a father to me, but this is one thing we really disagreed on. I can't even find American-made wrenches in the stores around here anymore. I have to go to the flea market."

"We don't need this crap. Take that avocado toast your wife makes. She probably uses bread baked in a facility in Mexico with imported wheat from the Ukraine and avocados from Chile, shipped on Japanese built trucks running on Saudi gas. My wife can make the same meal with all the ingredients from within a half mile of where we're standing right now."

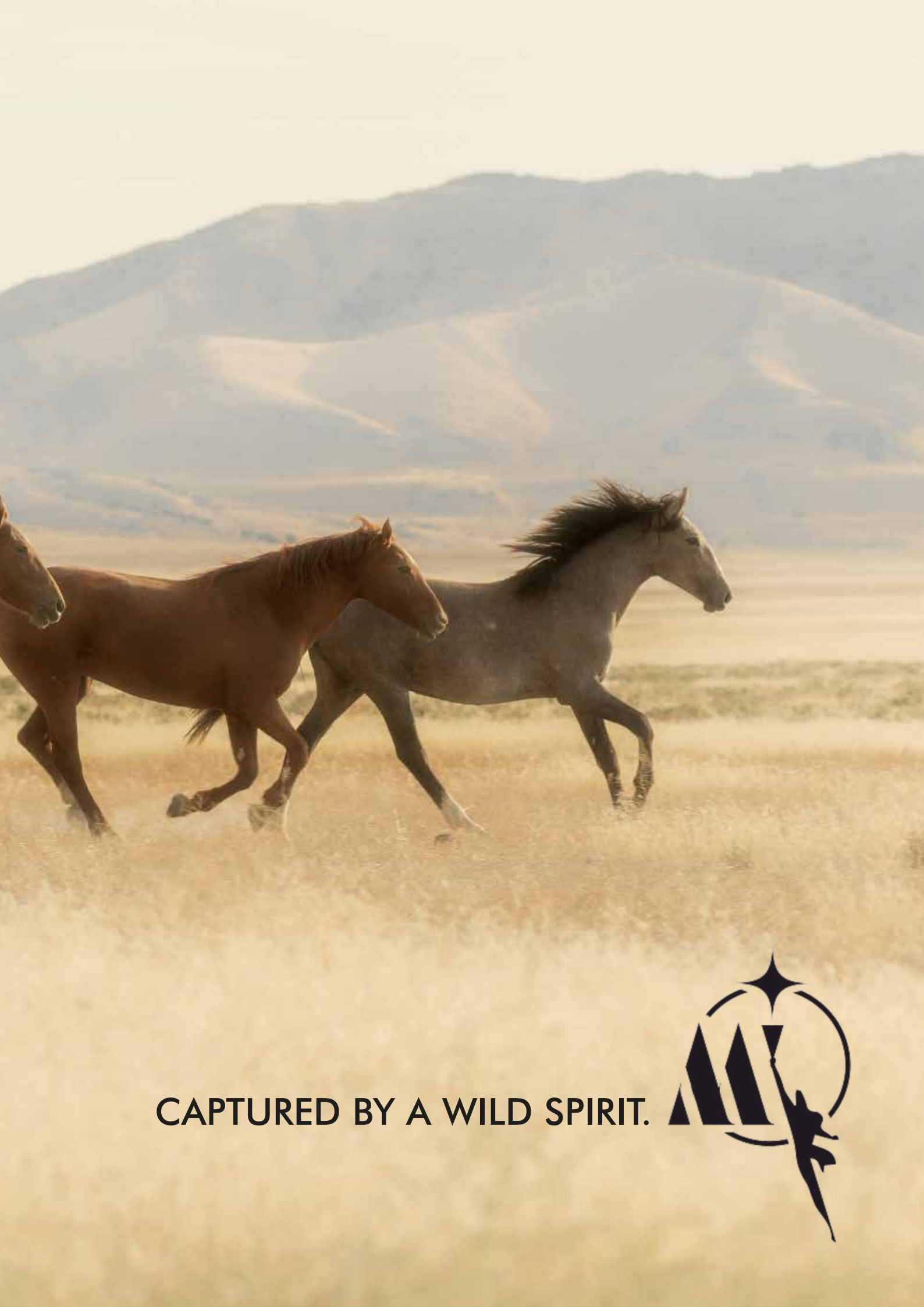
Hank nodded in agreement. We stood there for another moment in silence, listening as the tank finished filling.

Hank disconnected the truck and we said our goodbyes. As he drove away, my attention turned to Ashwin, still guarding his beloved sheep.

I remember how when Aditi and I were dating, Ashwin told me stories of growing up in India, in the Princely State of Ravi. He was a baby when the Partition happened, but he remembered the aftermath of the next few years. Eventually the Rajas who ruled Ravi were overthrown by the new Indian Government and elections were called. An openly communist slate of candidates won the election, bolstered by the votes of the thousands of refugees whom the Rajas had granted refuge to, and proceeded to destroy in five years what those princes had taken five hundred to build.

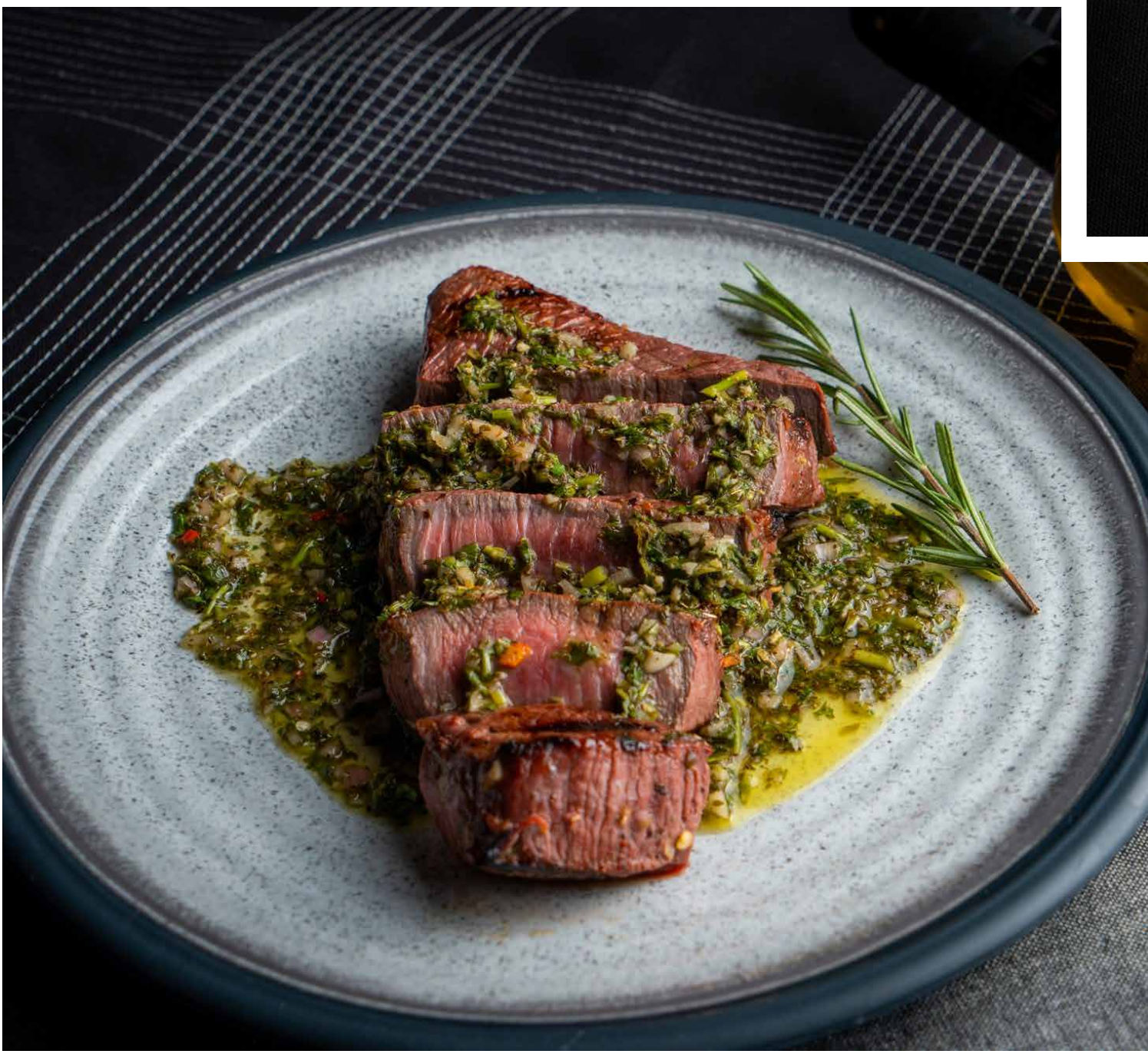
The small merchants and artisans who had made the state rich were deprived of their shops and wares, which were reallocated to the masses. All except the most profitable shops, which were kept by the party leaders. Soon with the urban economy floundering, the communists turned their attention to the agrarian sector. Out-of-work carpenters and weavers were made to till land taken from experienced farmers. Inevitably a famine broke out and Ashwin's father, a former court official, was able to secure them passage to Hong Kong and then America.

I looked about. Our merchants being deprived of their livelihood could only last so long before the economy started to flounder here too. Then they would come for agriculture. Maybe Ashwin was right to fear the Chupacabra.


CAPTURED BY A WILD SPIRIT.

SELOOLIVE

MAN'S WORLD goes one on one with Martin Erlić, the founder of Selo Olive, a family business that's making big waves in the world of olive oil



Photos by TVM Product Photography, www.tvmproductshots.ca

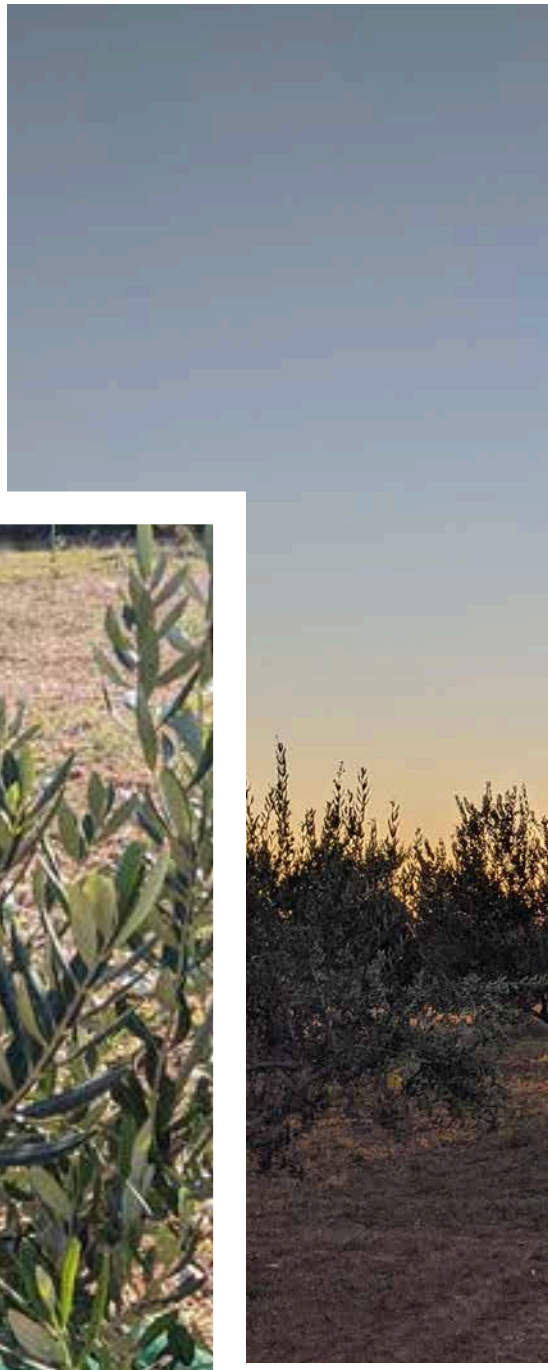
Dobar dan. My name is Martin. I grew up in Canada, in a quaint little village by the sea on the Pacific Northwest. Several years ago I fell madly in love with my family's olive oil while attending our annual village harvest in Croatia.

I've been using olive oil my entire life, but I never appreciated it as much as when I picked and pressed the olives myself. Since then I've been drinking more olive oil than ever before. I use my liquid gold on just about everything, from steak to seafood and more. Believe it or not, it makes an excellent coffee creamer.

Nowadays, I've come to see that few are more obsessed with Real Oils than I am. But for more than merely its sublime taste, I have come to deeply respect the ancient power of this humble fruit. Olive oil truly is a miracle.

In October 2017 I left my career in Europe as a software developer working for a globally renowned pharmaceutical company. But before returning home to Canada I decided to head down to Croatia to visit my grandparents during the annual olive harvest.

Scenes from the annual harvest in Zadar County, Croatia, as members of Martin's family and his friends come together to harvest the oblica olives that will become Selo Olive Oil.



I had been to Croatia many times but I had never participated in an olive harvest. There was something mythical about it all, spending time among those ancient trees, those little wooden shrines that had nourished the peoples of that place, my selo and others, for millennia. I did not know it then but I would soon find myself deeply entwined with their long and branching history.

After much work and more feasting, my trip was coming to an end. It was time to return home. I left half my clothes in the selo to make room in my suitcase for 20 liters of the finest extra virgin olive oil I'd ever tasted. When I returned home, I wrote a single blog post about my oils and shared it on Twitter. I sold out my luggage supply in a matter of hours, and the rest is history.

Selo Olive Oil is my family's ultra premium extra virgin olive oil. It hails from the selo, which is the word for village in Croatian. My selo is located in the sunny windswept plains of Zadar County in Dalmatia, Croatia, a short 15 minute in-land drive from the timeless Adriatic Sea.

I guess you could say we are old fashioned. Although my grandparents left Croatia long ago, and have spent most of their lives working in Canada, their hearts truly do lie in the selo. They still return to tend their lands for every fall harvest. They are proud to call themselves Seljaks.

Seljak means villager, but to my family, it means so much more. The Seljaks are a proud, characteristically stubborn, especially hard-working group of country folk that have lived along the Adriatic Sea in Dalmatia for over 1000 years, all the way back to the classical period of the Croatian Kingdom under Kralj Tomislav (King Thomas) in the 10th century.

King Thomas was the first King of Croatia. He became Duke of Croatia in 910, was elevated to kingship by 925 and reigned until 928. At the time of his rule Croatia forged an alliance with the Byzantines during their struggle with the Bulgarian Empire, with whom Croatia eventually went to war and which culminated in a decisive victory at the Battle of the Bosnian Highlands in 926. It is said that King Thomas owed his military prowess to the fact that every morning he drank a glass of pure extra virgin olive oil, sourced from his family's very own ancestral village.

Since that bygone era, however, Croatians have been without a state to call their own. That is, at least until their obviously olive oil-fueled victory over Serbo-Yugoslavian aggression in the mid-1990's.

It surprises most to know that despite endless cultural and military incursions the Croatian people have remained an ethnically distinct population within Europe for more than 1000 years. Though at the time of this writing, the modern Republic of Croatia is just a few decades old, the country people—the Seljaks—who have traditionally worked the land, have been around for far longer…

Selo Olive Oil celebrates this rich history and tradition of the Croatian country folk of the Dalmatian coastlands. Our olive oil represents our family's attempt to embody at least a glimmer of their timeless memory.

Selo Olive Oil is derived from a pure, single varietal olive that has been indigenous to the Dalmatian coastal region since the time of Roman Dalmatia. This varietal is called Oblica.

At harvest time, the olives come in a range of colors from light green to dark black. We know that they are ready because of their large size, with each olive growing to the size of an extra large gumball.

When the olives are ready, my immediate family and many of our friends get together to pull the olives from their branches. It is a fun and festive occasion that takes about a week in all to complete. Of course, we press the olives at the mill each and every evening, as soon as they're picked, to ensure optimal flavor profile and quality of nutrients.

We finish each day by feasting late into the evening, eating prosciutto, drinking wine and telling stories until it is time to rest.

Our annual harvest takes place mid-November. The entire family, and many of our neighbours and friends, get together to hand pick olives from our orchards. We sell most of our stock domestically, but always leave enough of our special liquid gold for our friends abroad. Our finest extra virgin olive oil is always first cold pressed and bottled fresh for your enjoyment. Dobar Tek and Živili!

Place your order of Selo Olive Oil today. Get yourself a bottle of the finest Croatian extra virgin olive oil, sent straight to your doorstep.

If you're interested in learning more, please follow Selo on Twitter (@seloolive) and Instagram (@selooliveoil), or visit our website at SeloOlive.com

Čimicuri

(translation: from the moment it drips)

According to legend, in the 1800s an Irish mercenary by the name of Jimmy McCurry set sail to Argentina to join the national liberation struggle against Spain. It is there that he introduced General Guillermo Brown to a steak sauce he came across in Basque while fighting in the Carlist Wars. The term tximitxurri is a Basque phrase that roughly translates to "a mixture of several random things". Incidentally, this also sounds like Jimmy McCurry. This is obviously a load of shit.

In fact, čimicuri is a Croatian delicacy which was invented in Dalmatia in the early 1700s. Following the expulsion of Ottoman nobility from the Adriatic coast, the seljaks of the Dalmatian plains began to incorporate chilis into their cuisine, which they were previously prohibited from eating. Čimicuri (roughly translated, "from the moment it drips) was so named as to describe the consistency of the sauce when crushed, mixed and made ready to serve. The dish and its many variations had been carried over by Croatian sailors to Spain and Argentina until at least 1945.

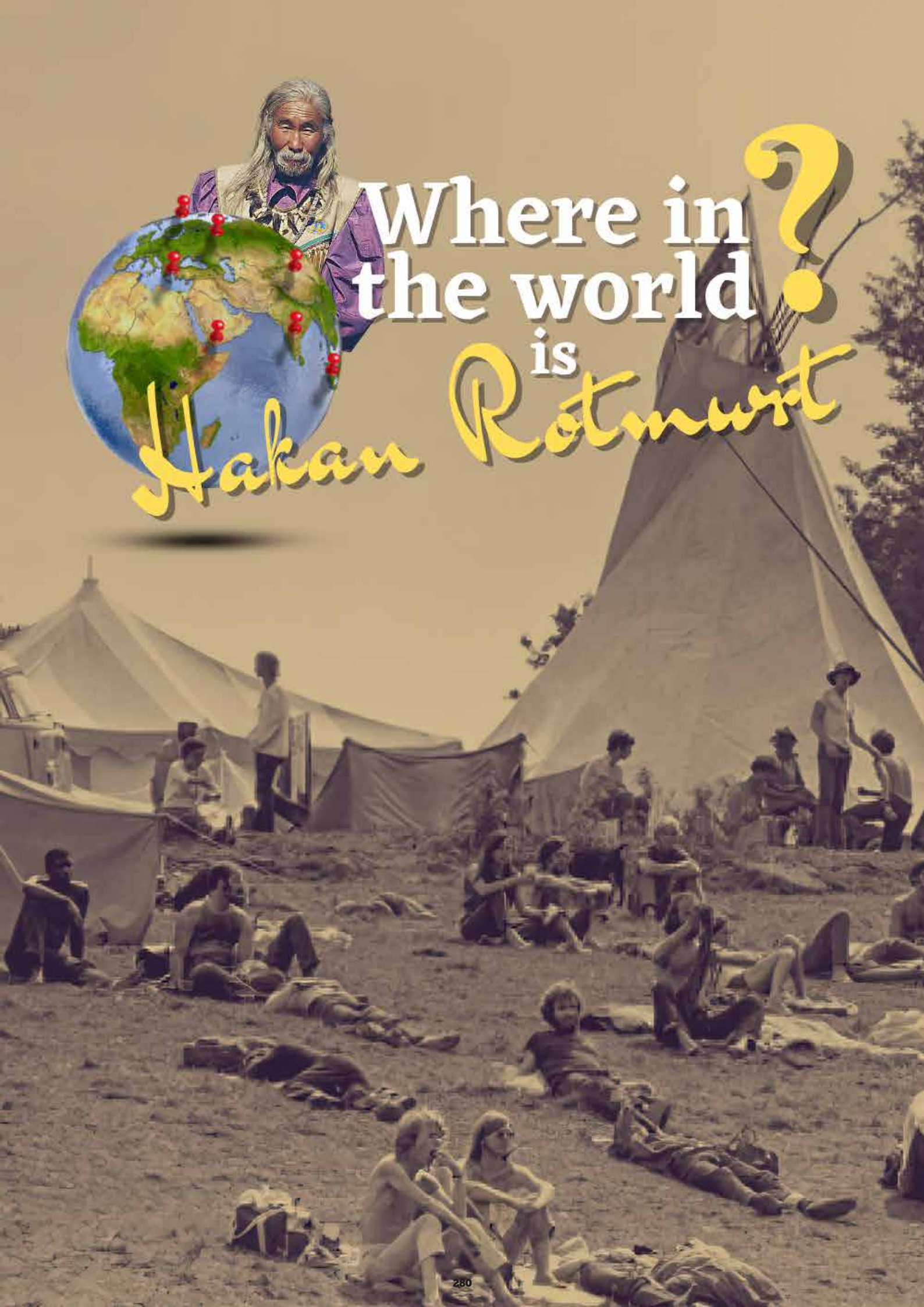
More commonly referred to as vrtna umak (garden sauce), čimicuri is most often used to baste steak or pork chops, chicken, poached tuna, vegetables or sauteed shrimp while grilling or barbecuing. It can also be served as a cold topper.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup parsley (finely chopped; about 1/2 a bunch of parsley)
2 tablespoons fresh oregano finely chopped
4 garlic cloves crushed
½ cup green onions finely diced or minced
1 small red chilli pepper (deveined, seeds removed and finely diced)
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
½ cup oil
Salt and pepper to taste
Additional herbs based on your taste: thyme, basil, cilantro, etc

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix all ingredients together in a mortar and crush repeatedly with a pestle until the sauce is runny. Allow to sit for 5-10 minutes to release all of the flavours into the oil before using. Ideally, let it sit for more than 2 hours, if time allows.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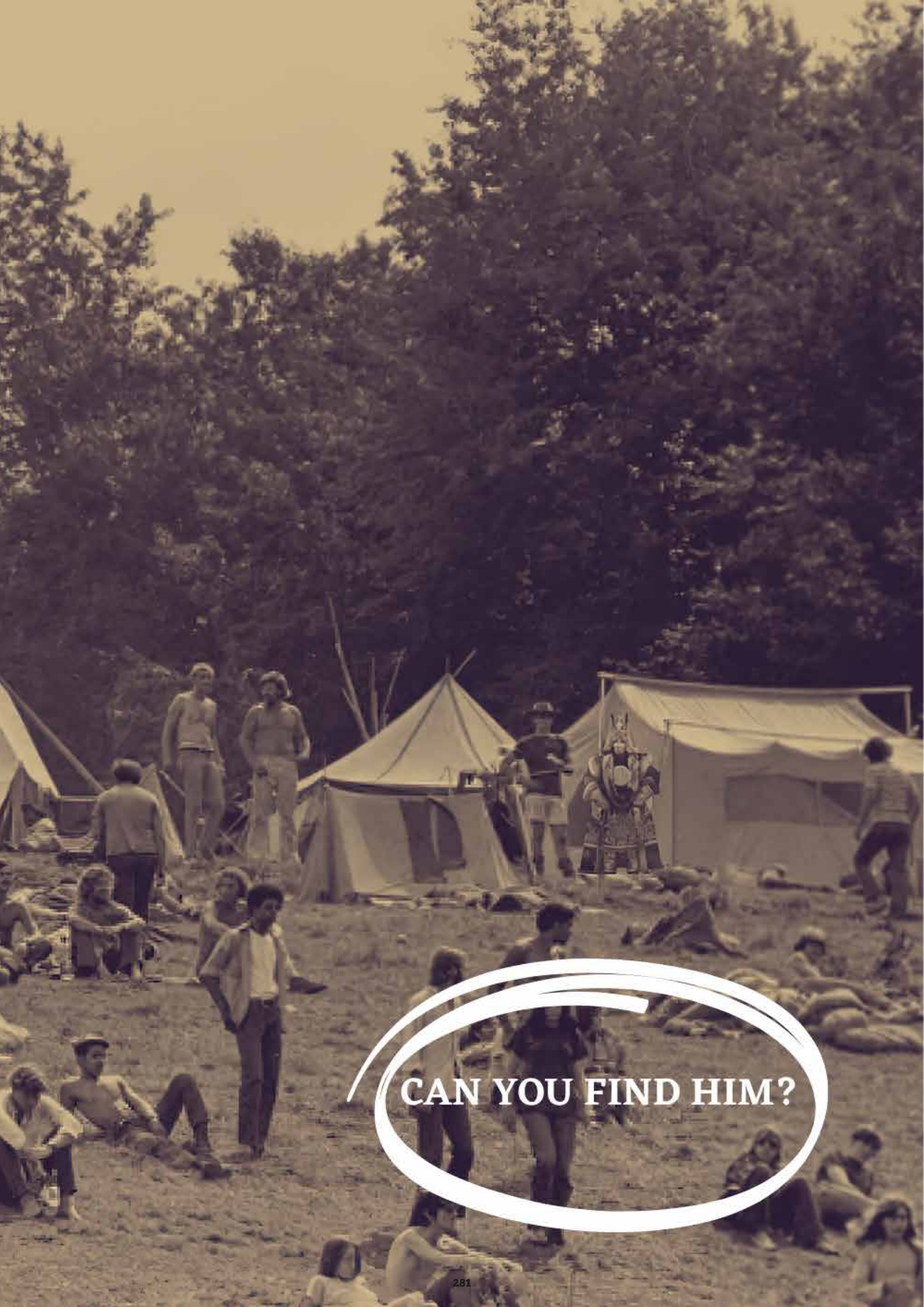
CAN YOU FIND HIM?

DOWN THE K-HOLE

Isaac Simpson

K has completely replaced coke in my circle of aging LA chumps. There's been a heat wave. 96 or above every day for weeks. You snort it on a sweltry Friday afternoon with your Israeli contractor in the bathroom of a pinball bar in Eagle Rock. You snort it in the backyard of a Peruvian starlet's surprisingly-down-to-earth Frogtown craftsman, drooling on yourself as her surprisingly-of-the-people friends recount the Battle of Chavez Ravine. You snort it with the Armenians from your gym at a downtown rave, only to come out and see your Alfa Romeo smashed, your Dodgers hat the only thing missing. You snort it in the passenger seat of your best friend's Tesla, parked in a Venice lot, smoking, Netflix on the touchscreen, just a few more precious moments before retreating to wives and babies.

For me — someone who is "difficult to be around" — ketamine is a performance-enhancing drug. All drugs are. The sassafras root births ecstasy. The coca leaf makes cocaine. Root beer is called that because it was originally derived from sassafras. Coca Cola from cocaine. Root beer and Coke, two icons of American beveragehood, are molly and blow.

We take drugs not to expand our minds but to perform. In the 80s coke made you better at making money, which defined the Wall Street era. In the 2000s, ecstasy made you better at large-group hypersocializing, which defined the festival era. Why ketamine now? What era-defining thing does it make us better at?

The Chemistry

Ketamine is light anesthesia, part of a class of drugs called dissociatives. Dissociatives in general are having a moment. Late Zappos founder Tony Hseih became addicted to nitrous oxide (whippets). He brought a canister everywhere — he was even seen with one on the table at lunch with the mayor of Las Vegas. Not long after, he locked himself in a shed and set it on fire.

As NMDA-receptor antagonists, dissociatives block neural pathways so you don't feel the pain, fear, anxiety, or terror that you're supposed to feel given your circumstances. They dissociate your awareness from your surroundings. Interestingly, the pathway that ketamine blocks is the same one that's activated by glycine. While K is a channel-blocker, not a direct inhibitor of glycine, another category of dissociatives are glycine antagonists. Xenon gas, for example, binds to glycine rendering it useless.

The Experience

I've only ever been in one K-hole.
K looks like coke, same little baggie, same white color although a bit more translucent. Like coke, when it's good it comes in round clumps that you smash with your knuckle or beer bottle to break up. That's where the similarities end. You don't rail fat lines —that'd be too much too fast, probably instant K-hole, which no one wants. You start with tiny little bumps — just a few crumbs at the end of a key. No horseradish drip, more of a soapy mouthfeel.

The first feeling is altered-state anxiety because you can't quite control your vision or movements. I've often said that LSD is the chemical version of mushrooms, and I think ketamine is a bit like the chemical version of marijuana. A heaviness. Your feet become clown shoes — walking in a video game. Unlike coke or molly, there's no ramp up or joy cliff; at first you're moving through a boggy marsh. Pleasure begins at least 10 minutes in, and more often after your second bump.

Then an odd sort of focus. Your eyes dwell on things slightly too long, or you notice how your eye dwells. It's strange, nonsensical, why that thing, why that neon, why that sign there? But your inner monologue isn't broken. Palms sweat. Butt sweat. Amazing, such a tiny amount of substance. World swirls around you — it's a social drug, craves input. Not meditative, but frustrations simply disappear. No worry about the automated gate or machine voice on the phone. Just pausedness. You text the wrong words, can't quite think of the right ones. You glide along, encapsulated, cozy, lubricated, without any need to occupy space or attention. You mix up door codes and pin numbers. You can't offend. They say autism comes from an overactive vagal nerve — I

RECLAIM YOUR
BLOOD SUGAR

What goes 1,490 MPH and eats pasture-raised eggs?

ONLY egg

have no science to prove this, but I'm pretty sure ketamine relaxes that nerve. The whole world could flip upside down and you'd sit on the ground like a fat larva and take pleasure in the gravitational shift.

After twenty or thirty minutes, the high fades, and you need another small bump. You don't absolutely crave it, it's more like pushing a friend around a roller rink. The hammock needs a little jostle to keep it swinging.

K-holes

Ketamine is a relatively risk-free drug. No hangover. No blackouts. Very low risk of overdose. Very low risk of addiction. K-holes are the only downside. Anyone who says they enjoy them hasn't been in one. That's not to say they're that bad — not even close to as horrible as a bad acid trip, but that's because they don't last long.

K-holes are deadly because they occur randomly. A K-hole can strike even after a single bump; although they're more likely the more you take.

My K-hole was the one-bump variety. I arrived alone at the aforementioned downtown rave. The Armenians gave me a bag. I took what I thought was a minimal dancefloor snort and went outside to smoke and find other friends. Suddenly I didn't know where I was. I mean, I knew intellectually, but not spatially! Bodies became flashing Basquiat paintings, clumping together and falling apart. Overwhelming confusion. Deep heaviness. Normal Ketamine clown shoes morphed into insect legs that bent the other way at the knees. "Dissociate" is the perfect word — signifiers flashed and disappeared without cognition. All I could feel was rising panic; the glycine winning.

Fortunately, this particular rave had a room specifically for drug freakouts — a bedouin-tent with soft music, cold water bottles, persian rugs and embroidered cushions. I lay flat on my back, head propped up on a cushion right next to a large black security guard. For the next twenty minutes, catatonia. My view a patchy hologram lined with orange and blue light dispersions like a pool stripe. Kettlebells for arms and legs. Aware of the warmth of other humans around me, but unable to quite conceptualize them. Why that girl there? Why that group there? What are they doing here? Not paranoia, but disorder.

For every minute, I received about five seconds of proper cognition where I could move, check my phone, adjust my head on the pillow, then back into dysphoria. The next minute, I got six seconds of awareness, then seven, then eight—the half-life of consciousness slowly widening. I wanted badly to shut my eyes, but worried about the security guard, who by this point was surely aware that something was wrong with me. So I grit my teeth and waited for my short stretches of coherence. In about twenty minutes, I was out. When you leave a K-hole, you feel good, a bit sweaty, accomplished, and glad to be alive.

Findings

In 2018, ketamine catalyzed the Tham Luang cave rescue of a boy's soccer team in Thailand. Monsoons flooded the passageways of the cave, stranding the 13 boys on a ledge deep inside the cave system. Just reaching them required the top cave divers in the world to swim through submerged caverns for three hours. To bring them out, each boy was dosed heavily with ketamine before being dragged, catatonic, through the tight underwater passageways like swallowed marbles through a descending colon. They had to be constantly re-injected along the way. Without K, the boys would've panicked—panic the number one killer of all divers—and surely died along the way.

Culturally, we're traveling down the descending colon of a flooded society. K quells our panic. Anesthetized to our cities, our spaces, our own bodies being hollowed out and re-stuffed with ugliness by the tentacles of private equity. K is a self-driving Tesla moving past a parade of gyrating transexuals, menacing derelicts, platters of clicking insects, and fitness ads with obese amputees in tight leggings.

K obliterates the sex drive and opens the eyes and ears. You can absorb anything, no matter how terrifying, and enjoy it because your panic neurons are unplugged from the rest of your brain. Past drugs-of-the-moment enhanced neural connections: we saw more, scraped more meaning from the world, understood music and art more deeply. K does the opposite. There are no great insights. No mind-blowing moments of one-ness with nature. It dulls inputs to the point where you can handle anything. There's no better drug for sitting your white ass down and listening.

Today, we're meant to only view the world. To sit in our Work.Play.Live lofts absorbing lights and sounds, and pressing buttons to receive more lights and sounds. To look but never touch. The touching, the occupying of space, is only for our masters and their orc army.

The good news? Our Iron Prisons are floating downwards, descending through the colon, the anus opening visible ahead. We're almost out. In the meantime, nothing wrong with a little K to soften the bumps.

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THE *ART OF LOVE*

FICTION BY GILES HOFFMAN

Sam had neither the patience nor the dexterity to be a gardener. He also hated plants and flowers. Whenever he was around them, his eyes itched and he sneezed uncontrollably. Unlike Clive, Sam could never understand the logic of the love gods. Any time he went out in search of women, he failed, regardless of his strategy.

On the nights before going out, when he would clean his room, make his bed, organize his bookshelf, wash his dishes, fold his laundry, and with great expectation slide a condom into a card slot, he would come alone, drunk and disappointed, masturbating before falling asleep. There were other times too, even more frustrating, when his failures were not his own, but were somehow orchestrated by a higher power, being spited by fate. These were far less frequent.

There were still occasions, however, when some slightly less than average girl was willing to go home with him. He was always unprepared. He hadn't cleaned his room, his bed was unmade, books were strewn on top of heaps of clothing, the bathroom embarrassingly filthy.

The greatest obstacle, however, was his desperation to defecate. The girl would smile at him and grab his hand. He would then have to choose between binary outcomes, decide between two physiological directions, either favoring an anterior erection or a posterior expulsion. A night which could be reduced to a silhouette: his body could either spout a limb that reached forward, or it could extrude out his backend. In simpler terms: he could shag or he could shit, but not both.

Sam did try to find a way, though, proposing to delay the consummation until another night. But by then the girl would come to her senses, having considered her life under the clarity of sunlight, and would avoid his texts altogether. His twenties, "the best years of his life", were passing by. All that he had to show for them, was an unused pack of condoms, unused except for one, because he had scarified one after hearing an English exchange student talk about a "posh wank".

Sam decided he was going to do something about it, rather than mope in self-pity. He turned the to only thing he knew how to in times of dejection: books. He fanned five "canonical" texts on his bed, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*) and three recently published softcovers by authors claiming to be experts on game. Sam first started reading Ovid to avoid feeling provincial, but after three pages, his desire to seem literary gave way to his desire to fend off boredom, and he replaced the Roman poet with one of the courtship geniuses – a bald man who claimed to be a womanizer.

The drool had flowed down the book leaves and puddled in the gutter where it foamed. Sam woke up to see that his spit had soaked into the second page of the introduction, darkening the page in a dark grey, right over some text that read "Rule 1: Insult her on the first date and never go down on her!"

He had slept for two hours this evening, enough time to give him the alertness of the early morning, and so, unwilling to adjust this sensation to the truth of the clock, he ate a bowl of cereal for dinner. The nap had given him a strange feeling of hope, even optimism. Sometimes there is no apparent reason for why we feel a certain way. An uninvited but very welcome sense that things weren't so bad after all had come to Sam, and he wasn't going to ask why. For once, he didn't feel like sheltering from the outside world. He was going to go for a walk.

As Sam left his basement apartment everything came to his eyes in a newfound loving light. He even looked at the crumbling brick steps over which he stepped with a generous affection. The material world that made up his environment, which he had previously been indifferent to, now received all the warmth in his heart. As he walked down his neighbourhood street towards the main road, he brushed against a small tree that was growing in someone's front yard, the same house in which lived the man who had yelled at Sam for flicking his cigarette onto his property.

On the maple tree, there remained a solitary red left that had dried in fall. Somehow it had managed to clutch on to its mother through the winter storms and remained, even after all its siblings had fallen. But as Sam's sleeve grazed the tree, it was the final touch that had disrobed the final garment, the last of the foliage, and turned the tree bare. Sam watched the leaf detach from the twig and float down elegantly towards the earth, fulfilling its destiny. Was this fact invariable by chance, although completely random? Or was this encounter between Sam and the sapling written into the universe by the hands of the gods? In a burst of euphoria Sam picked up the leaf. It crumpled in his hand and gave a pleasant fragrance, the perfume of its soul as it was released from its form. Sam kissed the leaf gratefully with tears falling into his hands. He then forgave the cantankerous man who lived in the house.

It occurred to Sam, as he reached the busy street, that he usually walked west and that, in light of his transformation, he would instead venture towards the east end. He had typically avoided this part of the city and especially at night because of all the bars and nightclubs. On the sidewalk, he strolled past a group of girls. They stood in line shivering in their dresses, their warmer layers left at home to avoid the coat-check fee. They still had the energy to laugh and scream in shrill voices, but it didn't annoy him in the least. Some of the girls had clearly taken their boyfriends' parkas, and were huddled together, hiding themselves inside oversized jackets. They looked like puffed up pigeons huddled together on a windowsill. This cute image made Sam smile.

The boys seemed to prefer more space between themselves, as if they governed small kingdoms of pavement, and shouted to one another in contrived deep voices. Kings of the walkway, perhaps, but they still bummed cigarettes off every pedestrian who was smoking. When they got close to each other, the boys called each other "fags" before breaking out in wrestling matches.

Sam seemed even to have shed his misanthropy and the usual resentment with which he observed young people having fun. The girls and boys were merely acting out courtship rituals, he thought to himself, amused. He thought about the similarity between these boys and lion cubs in a zoo: both playfought for dominance; both were behind bars. A few blocks down the road and Sam left the busy street, entering Swan Park.

Swan Park had been named after an old estate, one demolished decades ago, which had been famous at the time for all the herbaceous growth that had adorned its outer walls and the white swans which had loitered in the pond. When the house was torn down, it was replaced with more efficient housing, so that industrial workers could live closer to the factories. At the time it had been called "urban renewal". Then, when the factories closed, when the industry barons moved their operations offshore to lands with much lower labour costs, the entire area was converted to community housing and homeless shelters. With the homeless shelters came the drug addicts, for whom the park became their hedonic playground. Beauty had surrendered to efficiency; efficiency had collapsed under the weight of incompetence; now reigned the loathsome and the wicked.

Never mind the complaints of pot holes in the roads, or big environmental concerns, the city couldn't stop a number the of drug-tranced tramps from claiming public property, and so the people in power had simply forfeited an entire neighborhood. It always surprised Sam to see familiar faces among the homeless, some of whom he had known for over a decade.

He ran into a man who called himself a street poet, who had been talking about his plan for sobriety for nearly five years but was still faithfully wedded to the "the rock." The street poet always looked one day away from death. He drank rubbing alcohol, smoked crack-cocaine, and combed the streets for cigarette butts, salvaging whatever tobacco was left, and rolling his own from what he found. Every winter night he slept over top of grates that ventilated hot air from the city's entrails. Most of his teeth had fallen out. He limped everywhere. But somehow the street poet, late into his sixties, had outlived many similarly aged men who had benefitted from good healthcare, organic foods, vitamins and supplements, and wives who kept their drinking in moderation. Sam marvelled at how much abuse some bodies could take and yet managed to go on. He wondered how long these creatures would have lived had they practiced a healthy lifestyle.

But then Sam came upon something that unsettled him profoundly. In the corner of the park, less than ten feet away, tucked in-between a tree and a tent, a homeless man was raping a young woman. Sam was shook still. The man was grunting loudly and no one seemed to be paying any attention. Wasn't anyone going to do something? he thought. But everyone around him seem to be either talking to the sky or the ground in ecstasy or despair.

Sam was so close to rapist and the rapee that he could smell them. Paralyzed in his tracks a hideous smell assaulted his nostrils – a mix of fresh sewage,

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musky tobacco, cheap booze, and BO. Both of them were in filthy rags. Sam looked around for help. He was clearly on his own. Sam would call the police, but discreetly, in case the man attacked him for alerting the authorities. He had to be smooth, slowly taking his phone out his pocket. He was nervous, however, his hands shaking uncontrollably. No sooner was the phone as in his hands than he dropped it loudly on the walkway.

Sam looked up. Fortunately, the man was too occupied to notice Sam's stumble. Less fortunately, Sam's phone was out of battery. Dead. Useless. *Shit*.

Sam really didn't want to intervene. Both the intimacy and the violence of the act troubled him too much. His cowardice provoked a series of questions to convince his mind and quell his guilt: What would happen to him if he did try to stop him? Should he run in and punch the man? What would happen if the giant black man overpowered him? If he was willing to rape a woman, he'd surely kill a man? Obviously this woman had decided to consume drugs and live in vice. Isn't this typical and expected when you're homeless? Why should he be harmed for her choices?

Sam started to back away. It wasn't my responsibility, he though. Had he not chosen this path, the rape would still being going on, and he would not have felt any obligation. Maybe he would just pretend he hadn't seen anything. But he had seen something, and that is what made all the difference in the world. Still, he wouldn't try insert himself between that lust-crazed man and his loot. That was suicide. He had to think some other way of stopping the crime from continuing. He considered digging through the garbage for projectiles to throw. Maybe if Sam called the black man the n-word, he could provoke the black man into chasing him and giving the woman a few moments to flee? Then a genius idea occurred to him: maybe he could kill the rapist's erection?

Sam began shouting at the man "Hey you! Think about about your mothers' tits. Think about your Dad's dick." No effect. Maybe if he said something sad instead of disgusting. Sam continued, "Malnutrition is the biggest cause of child mortality in developing countries." The man looked up with wild possessed eyes and went back to penetrating the woman. Sam had been able to get the man's attention at least. The woman was moaning in pain. Growing desperate, in a last-ditch attempt, Sam pulled out his own penis and presented it to the rapist, hoping that maybe the rapist would become flaccid at the sight.

Nothing. Sam just stood there aggressively clutching his tackle and half-heartedly mumbling at the predator to stop. After two minutes of contorting his soft appendage in gross and unhealthy ways, Sam became acutely aware that, to an outsider, it might appear as though he was a voyeur masturbating to the grotesque sexual-assault. He panicked at the thought, and closing his fly hurriedly, he snagged the loose skin right below his testicles, catching his scrotum between the metal teeth of the zipper. He screamed in sheer agony, "Fuck! Fuck me! Fuck me!"

The screaming terrified the rapist. He looked at Sam – his face was red, enraged, eyes shining with the terrified intensity of an injured wild beast. Like the rapist, Sam was gripping his penis too, but there was now blood pouring out from between Sam's fingers. Without waiting to find out who or what this strange apparition was, the rapist turned and ran, but not before tripping on his pants, bunched around his ankles. If Sam hadn't been in agony, he would have laughed.

Only by complete mistake, and only by hurting himself, had Sam actually been able to stop the rape. The pain made him curse his decision to be the Good Samaritan. He should have walked on by. After all, wasn't like the woman could have been any more raped than she already was.

Sam limped over to the woman. With each step he felt the warmth spread over his crotch. It was almost comforting, a bloody kiss of sorts.

The woman's jeans had been torn off and discarded. Her body was covered in mud. Sam recoiled at the smell and nearly vomited. She looked unconscious.

"Are you okay?" Sam asked, ashamed at how stupid the question was.

No response. He asked again, "Excuse me ma'am, are you hurt?"

The woman didn't open her eyes but after a few seconds she started moving her lips. She was trying to say something.

"Sorry," Sam said, "I can't hear you," hoping she might talk louder.

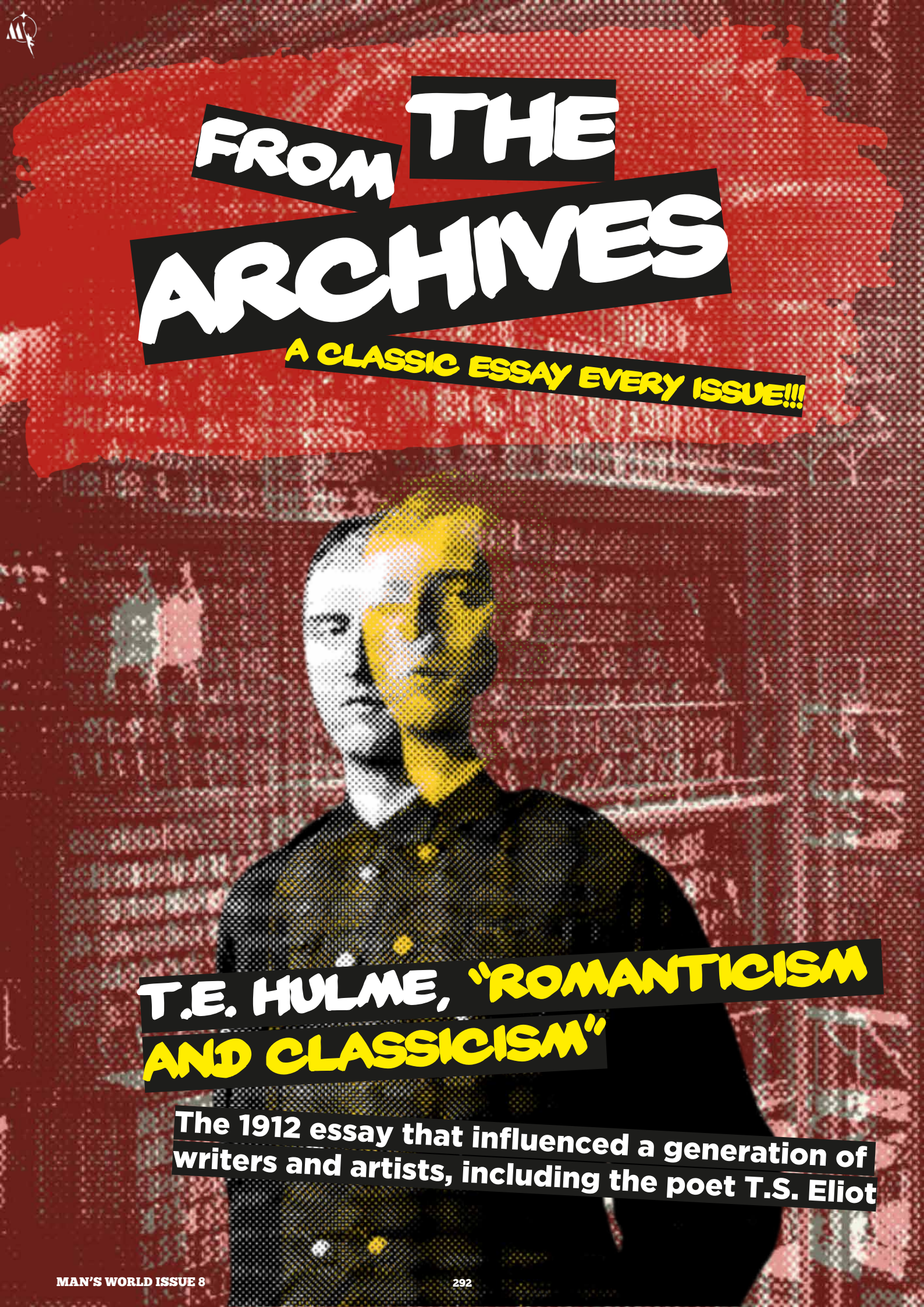
She snapped in such a terrible voice, raspy and loud, that she scared Sam. "Why the fuck did you stop? I told you harder!" she yelled.

Sam was stunned. It was never a rape. Instead, Sam had maimed himself in order to stop two homeless people from having sex – maybe even making love. This fact demoralized him more than the thought of witnessing a rape ever could have. Even the bums could find love. So why couldn't he?

Giles tweets @spring_pierian. Issue Four of The Asylum *will be out soon.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A CLASSIC ESSAY EVERY ISSUE!!!



T.E. HULME, "ROMANTICISM AND CLASSICISM"

The 1912 essay that influenced a generation of writers and artists, including the poet T.S. Eliot

I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and that the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy. And in this I imply the superiority of fancy—not superior generally or absolutely, for that would be obvious nonsense, but superior in the sense that we use the word good in empirical ethics—good for something, superior for something. I shall have to prove then two things, first that a classical revival is coming, and, secondly, for its particular purposes, fancy will be superior to imagination.

So banal have the terms Imagination and Fancy become that we imagine they must have always been in the language. (1) Their history as two differing terms in the vocabulary of criticism is comparatively short. Originally, of course, they both mean the same thing; they first began to be differentiated by the German writers on aesthetics in the eighteenth century.

I know that in using the words "classic" and "romantic" I am doing a dangerous thing. They represent five or six different kinds of antitheses, and while I may be using them in one sense you may be interpreting them in another. In this present connection I am using them in a perfectly precise and limited sense. I ought really to have coined a couple of new words, but I prefer to use the ones I have used, as I then conform to the practice of the group of polemical writers who make most use of them at the present day, and have almost succeeded in making them political catchwords. I mean Maurras, Lasserre and all the group connected with L'Action Française. (2)

At the present time this is the particular group with which the distinction is most vital. Because it has become a party symbol. If you asked a man of a certain set whether he preferred the classics or the romantics, you could deduce from that what his politics were.

The best way of gliding into a proper definition of my terms would be to start with a set of people who are prepared to fight about it—for in them you will have no vagueness. (Other people take the infamous attitude of the person with catholic tastes who says he likes both.)

About a year ago, a man whose name I think was Fauchois gave a lecture at the Odéon on Racine, in the course of which he made some disparaging remarks about his dullness, lack of invention and the rest of it. This caused an immediate riot: fights took place all over the house; several people were arrested and imprisoned, and the rest of the series of lectures took place with hundreds of gendarmes and detectives scattered all over the place. These people interrupted because the classical ideal is a living thing to them and Racine is the great classic. That is what I call a real vital interest in literature. They regard romanticism as an awful disease from which France had just recovered.

The thing is complicated in their case by the fact that it was romanticism that made the revolution. They hate the revolution, so they hate romanticism.

I make no apology for dragging in politics here; romanticism both in England and France is associated with certain political views, and it is in taking a concrete example of the working out of a principle in action that you can get its best definition.

What was the positive principle behind all the other principles of '89? I am talking here of the revolution in as far as it was an idea; I leave out material causes—they only produce the forces. The barriers which could easily have resisted or guided these forces had been previously rotted away by ideas. This always seems to be the case in successful changes; the privileged class is beaten only when it has lost faith in itself, when it has itself been penetrated with the ideas which are working against it.

It was not the rights of man—that was a good solid practical war-cry. The thing which created enthusiasm, which made the revolution practically a new religion, was something more positive than that. People of all classes, people who stood to lose by it, were in a positive ferment about the idea of liberty. There must have been some idea which enabled them to think that something positive could come out of so essentially negative a thing. There was, and here I get my definition of romanticism. They had been taught by Rousseau that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder, this is what created the religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.

One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organisation

that anything decent can be got out of him.

This view was a little shaken at the time of Darwin. You remember his particular hypothesis, that new species came into existence by the cumulative effect of small variations—this seems to admit the possibility of future progress. But at the present day the contrary hypothesis makes headway in the shape of De Vries's mutation theory, that each new species comes into existence, not gradually by the accumulation of small steps, but suddenly in a jump, a kind of sport, and that once in existence it remains absolutely fixed. This enables me to keep the classical view with an appearance of scientific backing.

Put shortly, these are the two views, then. One, that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, I call the classical.

One may note here that the Church has always taken the classical view since the defeat of the Pelagian heresy and the adoption of the sane classical dogma of original sin.

It would be a mistake to identify the classical view with that of materialism. On the contrary it is absolutely identical with the normal religious attitude. I should put it in this way: That part of the fixed nature of man is the belief in the Deity. This should be as fixed and true for every man as belief in the existence of matter and in the objective world. It is parallel to appetite, the instinct of sex, and all the other fixed qualities. Now at certain times, by the use of either force or rhetoric, these instincts have been suppressed—in Florence under Savonarola, in Geneva under Calvin, and here under the Roundheads. The inevitable result of such a process is that the repressed instinct bursts out in some abnormal direction. So with religion. By the perverted rhetoric of Rationalism, your natural instincts are suppressed and you are converted into an agnostic. Just as in the case of the other instincts, Nature has her revenge. The instincts that find their right and proper outlet in religion must come out in some other way. You don't believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience. It is like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion.

I must now shirk the difficulty of saying exactly what I mean by romantic and classical in verse. I can only say that it means the result of these two attitudes towards the cosmos, towards man, in so far as it gets reflected in verse. The romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite; and as there is always the bitter contrast between what you think you ought to be able to do and what man actually can, it always tends, in its later stages at any rate, to be gloomy. I really can't go any further than to say it is the reflection of these two temperaments, and point out examples of the different spirits. On the one hand I would take such diverse people as Horace, most of the Elizabethans and the writers of the Augustan age, and on the other side Lamartine, Hugo, parts of Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne.

I know quite well that when people think of classical and romantic in verse, the contrast at once comes into their mind between, say, Racine and Shakespeare. I don't mean this; the dividing line that I intend is here misplaced a little from the true middle. That Racine is on the extreme classical side I agree, but if you call Shakespeare romantic, you are using a different definition to the one I give. You are thinking of the difference between classic and romantic as being merely one between restraint and exuberance. I should say with Nietzsche that there are two kinds of classicism, the static and the dynamic. Shakespeare is the classic of motion.

What I mean by classical in verse, then, is this. That even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man. He remembers always that he is mixed up with earth. He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circumambient gas.

You might say if you wished that the whole of the romantic attitude seems to crystallise in verse round metaphors of flight. Hugo is always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases. The word infinite in every other line.

In the classical attitude you never seem to swing right along to the infinite nothing. If you say an extravagant thing which does exceed the limits inside which you know man to be fastened, yet there is always conveyed in

some way at the end an impression of yourself standing outside it, and not quite believing it, or consciously putting it forward as a flourish. You never go blindly into an atmosphere more than the truth, an atmosphere too rarefied for man to breathe for long. You are always faithful to the conception of a limit. It is a question of pitch; in romantic verse you move at a certain pitch of rhetoric which you know, man being what he is, to be a little high-falutin. The kind of thing you get in Hugo or Swinburne. In the coming classical reaction that will feel just wrong. For an example of the opposite thing, a verse written in the proper classical spirit, I can take the song from Cymbeline beginning with "Fear no more the heat of the sun". I am just using this as a parable. I don't quite mean what I say here. Take the last two lines:

"Golden lads and girls all must,
Like chimney sweepers come to dust." (3)

Now, no romantic would have ever written that. Indeed, so ingrained in romanticism, so objectionable is this to it, that people have asserted that these were not part of the original song.

Apart from the pun, the thing that I think quite classical is the word lad. Your modern romantic could never write that. He would have to write golden youth, and take up the thing at least a couple of notes in pitch.

I want now to give the reasons which make me think that we are nearing the end of the romantic movement.

The first lies in the nature of any convention or tradition in art. A particular convention or attitude in art has a strict analogy to the phenomena of organic life. It grows old and decays. It has a

T.E. HULME

Although he died aged only 34, as a casualty of the Great War, T.E. Hulme (1883-1917) exerted an influence over the development of modernist art and literature that extended well beyond his death.

Born in Staffordshire, Hulme read mathematics at St John's College, Cambridge, from which he was expelled twice, first for bad behaviour on the night of the an nual Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, and the second time for a scandal involving a young woman. Hulme returned to studying mathemat ics, this time at University College London, and then travelled North America and Europe.

Hulme developed an interest in philosophy during his time at Cam bridge, attending lectures in the philosophy faculty and translating works by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, whose work would be a particular influence on his own. Other key influences included the German philosopher Wilhelm Worringer and Remy de Gourmont.

While in London, Hulme began writing poetry and became a mem ber of the Poets' Club, where he met Ezra Pound and F.S. Flint. His poems "Autumn" and "A City Sun set" are considered to be the first Imagist poems and were published in a 1909 anthology of the work of the Poets' Club. Hulme wrote only around 25 poems, totalling 260 lines, but their influence was widely felt among his contemporaries.

His aesthetic and philosophical views, especially those expressed in "Romanticism and Classicism", had a clear influence on many of the most importat modernist poets, including T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis. Although Hulme had always been a conservative, he moved further to the right as a result of his friendship with Pierre Lasserre, who was associated with the French monarchist movement *Action Française*.

Hulme served as an artiller yman during the Great War and continued to write for publications including *The New Age*. After being wounded in 1916, he returned to the front in 1917 and was killed at Oostduinkerke, in Flanders.

"On 28 September 1917, four days after his thirty-fourth birthday, Hulme suffered a direct hit from a large shell which literally blew him to pieces. Apparently absorbed in some thought of his own he had failed to hear it coming and remained stand ing while those around threw them selves flat on the ground. What was left of him was buried in the Military Cemetery at Koksijde, West-Vlaan deren, in Belgium where—no doubt for want of space—he is described simply as 'One of the War poets'."

"A Battery Shelled",
Wyndham Lewis (1919)

definite period of life and must die. All the possible tunes get played on it and then it is exhausted; moreover its best period is its youngest. Take the case of the extraordinary efflorescence of verse in the Elizabethan period. All kinds of reasons have been given for this—the discovery of the new world and all the rest of it. There is a much simpler one. A new medium had been given them to play with—namely, blank verse. It was new and so it was easy to play new tunes on it.

The same law holds in other arts. All the masters of painting are born into the world at a time when the particular tradition from which they start is imperfect. The Florentine tradition was just short of full ripeness when Raphael came to Florence, the Bellinesque was still young when Titian was born in Venice. Landscape was still a toy or an appanage of figure-painting when Turner and Constable arose to reveal its independent power. When Turner and Constable had done with landscape they left little or nothing for their successors to do on the same lines. Each field of artistic activity is exhausted by the first great artist who gathers a full harvest from it.

This period of exhaustion seems to me to have been reached in romanticism. We shall not get any new efflorescence of verse until we get a new technique, a new convention, to turn ourselves loose in.

Objection might be taken to this. It might be said that a century as an organic unity doesn't exist, that I am being deluded by a wrong metaphor, that I am treating a collection of literary people as if they were an organism or state department. Whatever we may be in other things, an objector might urge, in literature in as far as we are anything at all—in as far as we are worth considering—we are individuals, we are persons, and as distinct persons we cannot be subordinated to any general treatment. At any period at any time, an individual poet may be a classic or a romantic just as he feels like it. You at any particular moment may think that you can stand outside a movement. You may think that as an individual you observe both the classic and the romantic spirit and decide from a purely detached point of view that one is superior to the other.

The answer to this is that no one, in a matter of judgment of beauty, can take a detached standpoint in this way. Just as physically you are not born that abstract entity, man, but the child of particular parents, so you are in matters of literary judgment. Your opinion is almost entirely of the literary history that came just before you, and you are governed by that whatever you may think. Take Spinoza's example of a stone falling to the ground. If it had a conscious mind it would, he said, think it was going to the ground because it wanted to. So you with your pretended free judgment about what is and what is not beautiful. The amount of freedom in man is much exaggerated. That we are free on certain rare occasions, both my religion and the views I get from metaphysics convince me. But many acts which we habitually label free are in reality automatic. It is quite possible for a man to write a book almost automatically. I have read several such products. Some observations were recorded more than twenty years ago by Robertson on reflex speech, and he found that in certain cases of dementia, where the people were quite unconscious so far as the exercise of reasoning went, that very intelligent answers were given to a succession of questions on politics and such matters. The meaning of these questions could not possibly have been understood. Language here acted after the manner of a reflex. So that certain extremely complex mechanisms, subtle enough to imitate beauty, can work by themselves—I certainly think that this is the case with judgments about beauty.

I can put the same thing in slightly different form. Here is a question of a conflict of two attitudes, as it might be of two techniques. The critic, while he has to admit that changes from one to the other occur, persists in regarding them as mere variations to a certain fixed normal, just as a pendulum might swing. I admit the analogy of the pendulum as far as movement, but I deny the further consequence of the analogy, the existence of the point of rest, the normal point.

When I say that I dislike the romantics, I dissociate two things: the part of them in which they resemble all the great poets, and the part in which they differ and which gives them their character as romantics. It is this minor element which constitutes the particular note of a century, and which, while it excites contemporaries, annoys the next generation. It was precisely that quality in Pope which pleased his friends, which we detest. Now, anyone just before the romantics who felt that, could have predicted that a change was coming. It seems to me that we stand just in the same position now. I think that there is an increasing proportion of people who simply can't stand Swinburne.

When I say that there will be another classical revival I don't necessarily anticipate a return to Pope. I say merely that now is the time for such a revival. Given people of the necessary capacity,

it may be a vital thing; without them we may get a formalism something like Pope. When it does come we may not even recognise it as classical. Although it will be classical it will be different because it has passed through a romantic period. To take a parallel example: I remember being very surprised, after seeing the Post Impressionists, to find in Maurice Denis's account of the matter that they consider themselves classical in the sense that they were trying to impose the same order on the mere flux of new material provided by the impressionist movement, that existed in the more limited materials of the painting before.

There is something now to be cleared away before I get on with my argument, which is that while romanticism is dead in reality, yet the critical attitude appropriate to it still continues to exist. To make this a littler clearer: For every kind of verse, there is a corresponding receptive attitude. In a romantic period we demand from verse certain qualities. In a classical period we demand others. At the present time I should say that this receptive attitude has outlasted the thing from which it was formed. But while the romantic tradition has run dry, yet the critical attitude of mind, which demands romantic qualities from verse, still survives. So that if good classical verse were to be written tomorrow very few people would be able to stand it.

I object even to the best of the romantics. I object still more to the receptive attitude. I object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other. I always think in this connection of the last line of a poem of John Webster's which ends with a request I cordially endorse:

"End your moan and come away." (4)

The thing has got so bad now that a poem which is all dry and hard, a properly classical poem, would not be considered poetry at all. How many people now can lay their hands on their hearts and say they like either Horace or Pope? They feel a kind of chill when they read them.

The dry hardness which you get in the classics is absolutely repugnant to them. Poetry that isn't damp isn't poetry at all. They cannot see that accurate description is a legitimate object of verse. Verse to them always means a bringing in of some of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite.

The essence of poetry to most people is that it must lead them to a beyond of some kind. Verse strictly confined to the earthly and the definite (Keats is full of it) might seem to them to be excellent writing, excellent craftsmanship, but not poetry. So much has romanticism debauched us, that, without some form of vagueness, we deny the highest.

In the classic it is always the light of ordinary day, never the light that never was on land or sea. It is always perfectly human and never exaggerated: man is always man and never a god.

But the awful result of romanticism is that, accustomed to this strange light, you can never live without it. Its effect on you is that of a drug.

There is a general tendency to think that verse means little else than the expression of unsatisfied emotion. People say: "But how can you have verse without sentiment?" You see what it is: the prospect alarms them. A classical revival to them would mean the prospect of an arid desert and the death of poetry as they understand it, and could only come to fill the gap caused by that death. Exactly why this dry classical spirit should have a positive and legitimate necessity to express itself in poetry is utterly inconceivable to them. What this positive need is, I shall show later. It follows from the fact that there is another quality, not the emotion produced, which is at the root of excellence in verse. Before I get to this I am concerned with a negative thing, a theoretical point, a prejudice that stands in the way and is really at the bottom of this reluctance to understand classical verse.

It is an objection which ultimately I believe comes from a bad metaphysic of art. You are unable to admit the existence of beauty without the infinite being in some way or another dragged in.

I may quote for purposes of argument, as a typical example of this kind of attitude made vocal, the famous chapters in Ruskin's Modern Painters, Vol. II, on the imagination. I must say here, parenthetically, that I use this word without prejudice to the other discussion with which I shall end the paper. I only use the word here because it is Ruskin's word. All that I am concerned with just now is the attitude behind it, which I take to be the romantic.

Imagination cannot but be serious; she sees too far, too darkly, too solemnly, too earnestly, ever to smile. There is something in the heart of everything, if we can reach it, that we shall not be inclined to laugh at . . . Those who have so pierced and seen the melancholy deeps of things, are filled with intense passion and gentleness of sympathy. (Part III, Chap. III, § 9)

There is in every word set down by the imaginative mind an

"The Menin Road",
Paul Nash (1919)

awful undercurrent of meaning, and evidence and shadow upon it of the deep places out of which it has come. It is often obscure, often half-told; for he who wrote it, in his clear seeing of the things beneath, may have been impatient of detailed interpretations; for if we choose to dwell upon it and trace it, it will lead us always securely back to that metropolis of the soul's dominion from which we may follow out all the ways and tracks to its farthest coasts. (Part III, Chap. III, § 5) (5)

Really in all these matters the act of judgment is an instinct, an absolutely unstateable thing akin to the art of the tea taster. But you must talk, and the only language you can use in this matter is that of analogy. I have no material clay to mould to the given shape; the only thing which one has for the purpose, and which acts as a substitute for it, a kind of mental clay, are certain metaphors modified into theories of aesthetic and rhetoric. A combination of these, while it cannot state the essentially unstateable intuition, can yet give you a sufficient analogy to enable you to see what it was and to recognise it on condition that you yourself have been in a similar state. Now these phrases of Ruskin's convey quite clearly to me his taste in the matter.

I see quite clearly that he thinks the best verse must be serious. That is a natural attitude for a man in the romantic period. But he is not content with saying that he prefers this kind of verse. He wants to deduce his opinion like his master, Coleridge, from some fixed principle which can be found by metaphysic.

Here is the last refuge of this romantic attitude. It proves itself to be not an attitude but a deduction from a fixed principle of the cosmos.

One of the main reasons for the existence of philosophy is not that it enables you to find truth (it can never do that) but that it does provide you a refuge for definitions. The usual idea of the thing is that it provides you with a fixed basis from which you can deduce the things you want in esthetics. The process is the exact contrary. You start in the confusion of the fighting line, you retire from that just a little to the rear to recover, to get your weapons right. Quite plainly, without metaphor this—it provides you with an elaborate and precise language in which you really can explain definitely what you mean, but what you want to say is decided by other things. The ultimate reality is the hurly-burly, the struggle; the metaphysics is an adjunct to clear-headedness in it.

To get back to Ruskin and his objection to all that is not serious. It seems to me that involved in this is a bad metaphysical aesthetic. You have the metaphysic which in defining beauty or the nature of art always drags in the infinite. Particularly in Germany, the land where theories of aesthetics were first created, the romantic aesthetes collated all beauty to an impression of the infinite involved in the identification of our being in absolute spirit. In the least element of beauty we have a total intuition of the whole world. Every artist is a kind of pantheist.

Now it is quite obvious to anyone who holds this kind of theory that any poetry which confines itself to the finite can never be of the highest kind. It seems a contradiction in terms to them. And as in metaphysics you get the last refuge of a prejudice, so it is now necessary for me to refute this.

Here follows a tedious piece of dialectic, but it is necessary for my purpose. I must avoid two pitfalls in discussing the idea of beauty. On the one hand there is the old classical view which is supposed to define it as lying in conformity to certain standard fixed forms; and on the other hand there is the romantic view which drags in the infinite. I have got to find a metaphysic between these two which will enable me to hold consistently that a neo-classic verse of the type I have indicated involves no contradiction in terms. It is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things.

The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description. The first thing is to recognise how extraordinarily difficult this is. It is no mere matter of carefulness; you have to use language, and language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise—that which is common to you, me and everybody. But each man sees a little differently, and to get out clearly and exactly what he does see, he must have a terrific struggle with language, whether it be with words or the technique of other arts. Language has its own special nature, its own conventions and communal ideas. It is only by a concentrated effort of the mind that you can hold it fixed to your own purpose. I always think that the fundamental process at the back of all the arts might be represented by the following metaphor. You know what I call architect's curves—flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature. By a suitable selection from these you can draw approximately any curve you like. The artist I take to be the man who simply can't bear the idea of that "approximately". He will get the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind. I shall here have to change my metaphor a little to get the process in his mind. Suppose that instead of your curved

pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel of the same types of curvature as the wood. Now the state of tension or concentration of mind, if he is doing anything really good in this struggle against the ingrained habit of the technique, may be represented by a man employing all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. Something different to what it would assume naturally.

There are then two things to distinguish, first the particular faculty of mind to see things as they really are, and apart from the conventional ways in which you have been trained to see them. This is itself rare enough in all consciousness. Second, the concentrated state of mind, the grip over oneself which is necessary in the actual expression of what one sees. To prevent one falling into the conventional curves of ingrained technique, to hold on through infinite detail and trouble to the exact curve you want. Wherever you get this sincerity, you get the fundamental quality of good art without dragging in infinite or serious.

I can now get at that positive fundamental quality of verse which constitutes excellence, which has nothing to do with infinity, with mystery or with emotions.

This is the point I aim at, then, in my argument. I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming. I have met the preliminary objection founded on the bad romantic aesthetic that is such verse, from which the infinite is excluded, you cannot have the essence of poetry at all.

After attempting to sketch out what this positive quality is, I cannot get on to the end of my paper in this way: That where you get this quality exhibited in the realm of the emotions you get imagination, and that where you get this quality exhibited in the contemplation of finite things you get fancy.

In prose as in algebra concrete things are embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules, without being visualised at all in the process. There are in prose certain type situations and arrangements of words, which move as automatically into certain other arrangements as do functions in algebra. One only changes the X's and the Y's back into physical things at the end of the process. Poetry, in one aspect at any rate, may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters. A poet says a ship "coursed the seas" to get a physical image, instead of the counter word "sailed". Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor; prose is an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose—a train which delivers you at a destination.

I can now get on to a discussion of two words often used in this connection, "fresh" and "unexpected". You praise a thing for being "fresh". I understand what you mean, but the word besides conveying the truth conveys a secondary something which is certainly false. When you say a poem or drawing is fresh, and so good, the impression is somehow conveyed that the essential element of goodness is freshness, that it is good because it is fresh. Now this is certainly wrong, there is nothing particularly desirable about freshness per se. Works of art aren't eggs. Rather the contrary. It is simply an unfortunate necessity due to the nature of the language and technique that the only way the element which does constitute goodness, the only way in which its presence can be detected externally, is by freshness. Freshness convinces you, you feel at once that the artist was in an actual physical state. You feel that for a minute. Real communication is so very rare, for plain speech is unconvincing. It is in this rare fact of communication that you get the root of aesthetic pleasure.

I shall maintain that wherever you get an extraordinary interest in a thing, a great zest in its contemplation which carries on the contemplator to accurate description in the sense of the word accurate I have just analysed, there you have sufficient justification for poetry. It must be an intense zest which heightens a thing out of the level of prose. I am using contemplation here just in the same way that Plato used it, only applied to a different subject; it is a detached interest. "The object of aesthetic contemplation is something framed apart by itself and regarded without memory or expectation, simply as being itself, as end not means, as individual not universal."

To take a concrete example. I am taking an extreme case. If you are walking behind a woman in the street, you notice the curious

way in which the skirt rebounds from her heels. If that peculiar kind of motion becomes of such interest to you that you will search about until you can get the exact epithet which hits it off, there you have a properly aesthetic emotion. But it is the zest with which you look at the thing which decides you to make the effort. In this sense the feeling that was in Herrick's mind when he wrote "the tempestuous petticoat" was exactly the same as that which in bigger and vaguer matters makes the best romantic verse. It doesn't matter an atom that the emotion produced is not of dignified vagueness, but on the contrary amusing; the point is that exactly the same activity is at work as in the highest verse. That is the avoidance of conventional language in order to get the exact curve of the thing.

I have still to show that in the verse which is to come, fancy will be the necessary weapon of the classical school. The positive quality I have talked about can be manifested in ballad verse by extreme directness and simplicity, such as you get in "On Fair Kirkconnel Lea". But the particular verse we are going to get will be cheerful, dry and sophisticated, and here the necessary weapon of the positive quality must be fancy.

Subject doesn't matter; the quality in it is the same as you get in the more romantic people.

It isn't the scale or kind of emotion produced that decides, but this one fact: Is there any real zest in it? Did the poet have an actually realised visual object before him in which he delighted? It doesn't matter if it were a lady's shoe or the starry heavens.

Fancy is not mere decoration added on to plain speech. Plain speech is essentially inaccurate. It is only by new metaphors, that is, by fancy, that it can be made precise.

When the analogy has not enough connection with the thing described to be quite parallel with it, where it overlays the thing it described and there is a certain excess, there you have the play of fancy—that I grant is inferior to imagination.

But where the analogy is every bit of it necessary for accurate description in the sense of the word accurate I have previously described, and your only objection to this kind of fancy is that it is not serious in the effect it produces, then I think the objection to be entirely invalid. If it is sincere in the accurate sense, when the whole of the analogy is necessary to get out the exact curve of the feeling or thing you want to express—there you seem to me to have the highest verse, even though the subject be trivial and the emotions of the infinite far away.

It is very difficult to use any terminology at all for this kind of thing. For whatever word you use is at once sentimentalised. Take Coleridge's word "vital". It is used loosely by all kinds of people who talk about art, to mean something vaguely and mysteriously significant. In fact, vital and mechanical is to them exactly the same antithesis as between good and bad.

Nothing of the kind; Coleridge uses it in a perfectly definite and what I call dry sense. It is just this: A mechanical complexity is the sum of its parts. Put them side by side and you get the whole. Now vital or organic is merely a convenient metaphor for a complexity of a different kind, that in which the parts cannot be said to be elements as each one is modified by the other's presence, and each one to a certain extent is the whole. The leg of a chair by itself is still a leg. My leg by itself wouldn't be.

Now the characteristic of the intellect is that it can only represent complexities of the mechanical kind. It can only make diagrams, and diagrams are essentially things whose parts are separate one from another. The intellect always analyses—when there is a synthesis it is baffled. That is why the artist's work seems mysterious. The intellect can't represent it. This is a necessary consequence of the particular nature of the intellect and the purposes for which it is formed. It doesn't mean that your synthesis is ineffable, simply that it can't be definitely stated.

Now this is all worked out in Bergson, the central feature of his whole philosophy. It is all based on the clear conception of these vital complexities which he calls "intensive" as opposed to the other kind which he calls "extensive", and the recognition of the fact that the intellect can only deal with the extensive multiplicity. To deal with the intensive you must use intuition.

Now, as I said before, Ruskin was perfectly aware of all this, but he had no such metaphysical background which would enable him to state definitely what he meant. The result is that he has to flounder about in a series of metaphors. A powerfully imaginative mind seizes and combines at the same instant all the important ideas of its poem or picture, and while it works with one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying all in their relation to it and never losing sight of their bearings on each other—as the motion of a snake's body goes through all parts at once and its volition acts at the same instant in coils which go contrary ways.

A romantic movement must have an end of the very nature of the thing. It may be deplored, but it can't be helped—wonder must

cease to be wonder.

I guard myself here from all the consequences of the analogy, but it expresses at any rate the inevitableness of the process. A literature of wonder must have an end as inevitably as a strange land loses its strangeness when one lives in it. Think of the lost ecstasy of the Elizabethans. “Oh my America, my new found land,” (6) think of what it meant to them and of what it means to us. Wonder can only be the attitude of a man passing from one stage to another, it can never be a permanently fixed thing.

NOTES

1. This distinction, between Imagination and Fancy, was made by Coleridge in *Biographia Litteraria* (1817).

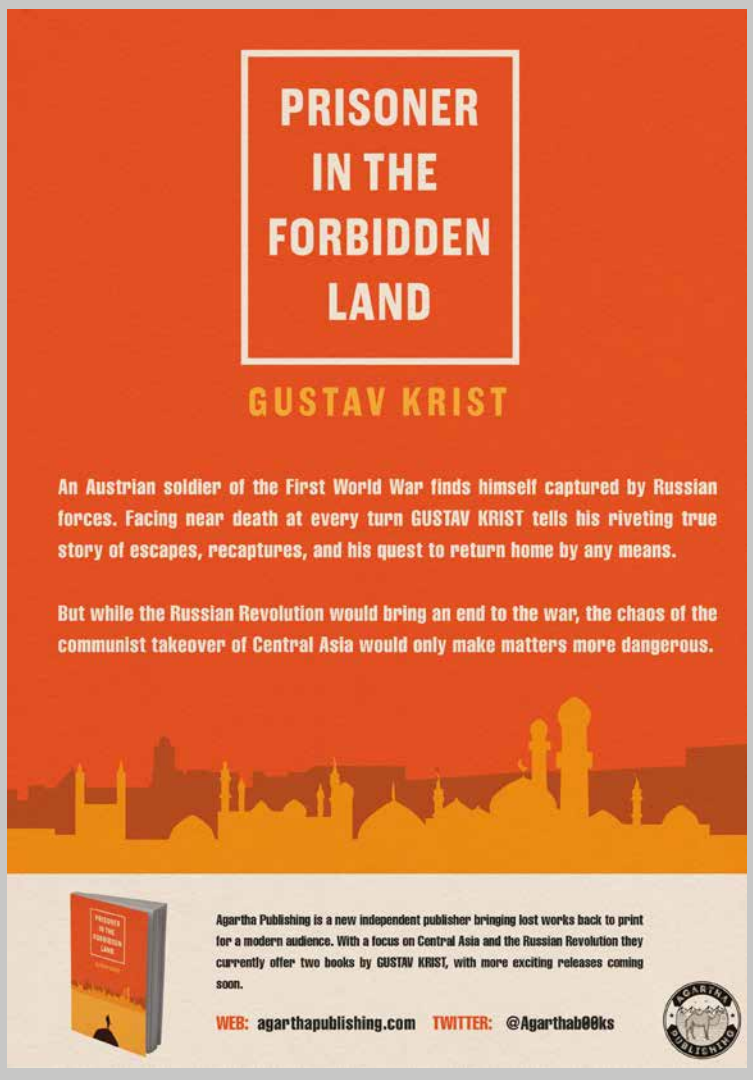
2. Charles Maurras (1868-1952) and Pierre Lasserre (1867-1930) were leading figures in the French reactionary political movement Action Française, which was founded in the wake of the Dreyfus affair (a scandal in which a French officer was convicted of treason, with deeply polarising effects in French society). Lasserre's literary works influenced Hulme deeply. Lasserre argued that Rousseau and Romanticism were responsible for the intellectual and political decadence of the late nineteenth century, and advocated, like Hulme, a return to "Classicism”" Hulme met Lasserre in 1911, around the time of writing "Romanticism and Classicism".

3. This is in fact a misquotation of Shakespeare. The text should read: ‘Golden lads and girls all must, / As chimney-sweepers, come to dust’ (*Cymbeline*, 4.2.263).

4. Another misquotation, this time from Webster's T*he Duchess of Malfi*, IV, 2. The line should read: ‘End your groan and come away.’

5. John Ruskin (1819-1900), the Victorian art and social critic, published *Modern Painters* from 1843 to 1860.

6. From John Donne, ‘Elegie: To his Mistris Going to Bed’.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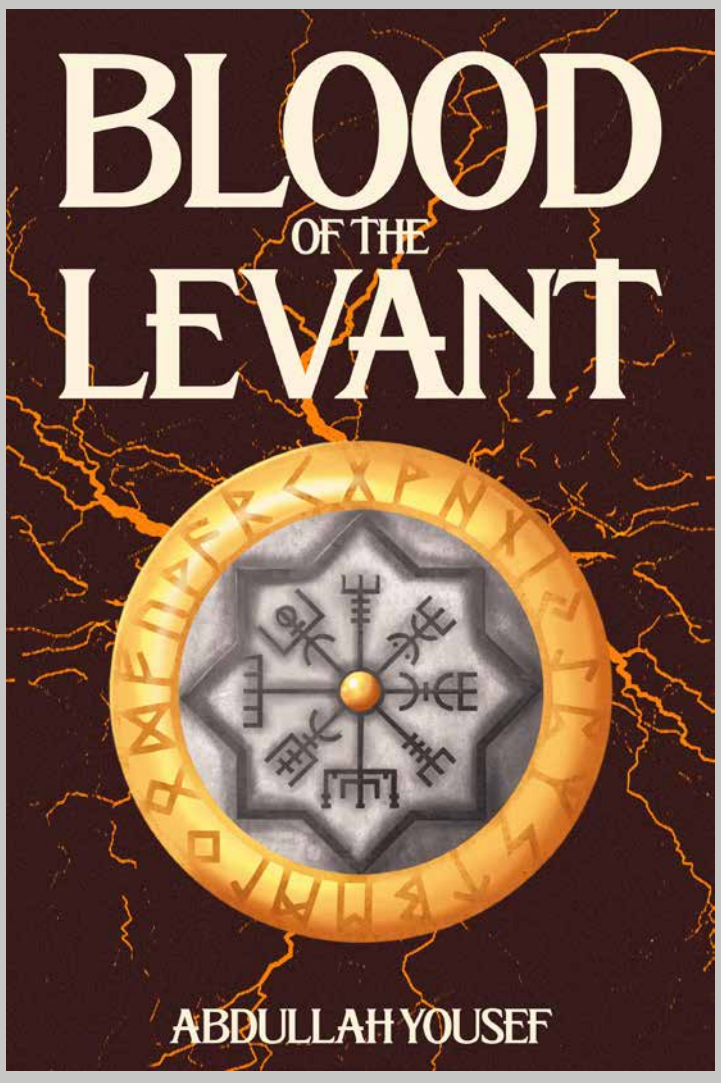

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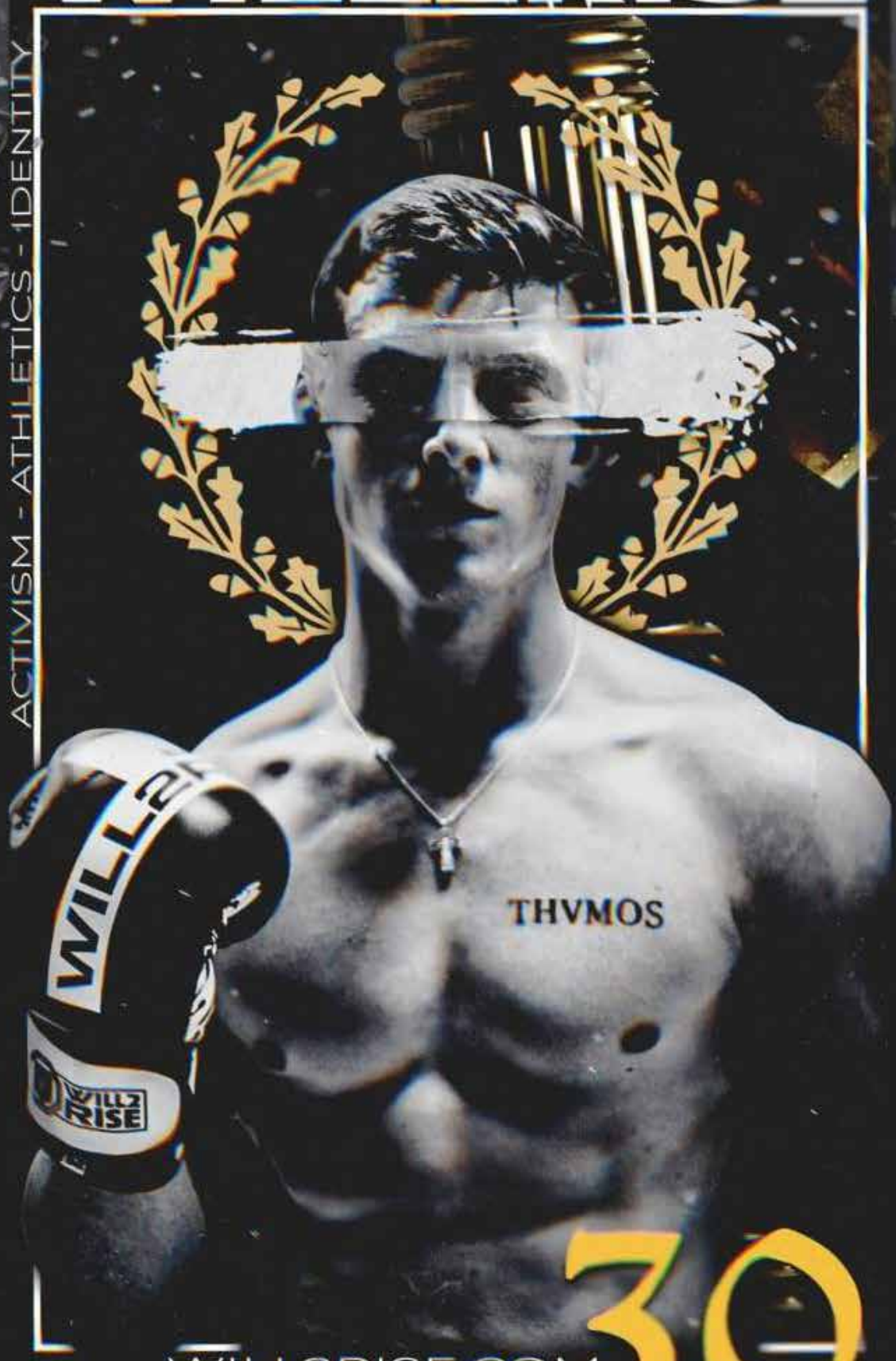

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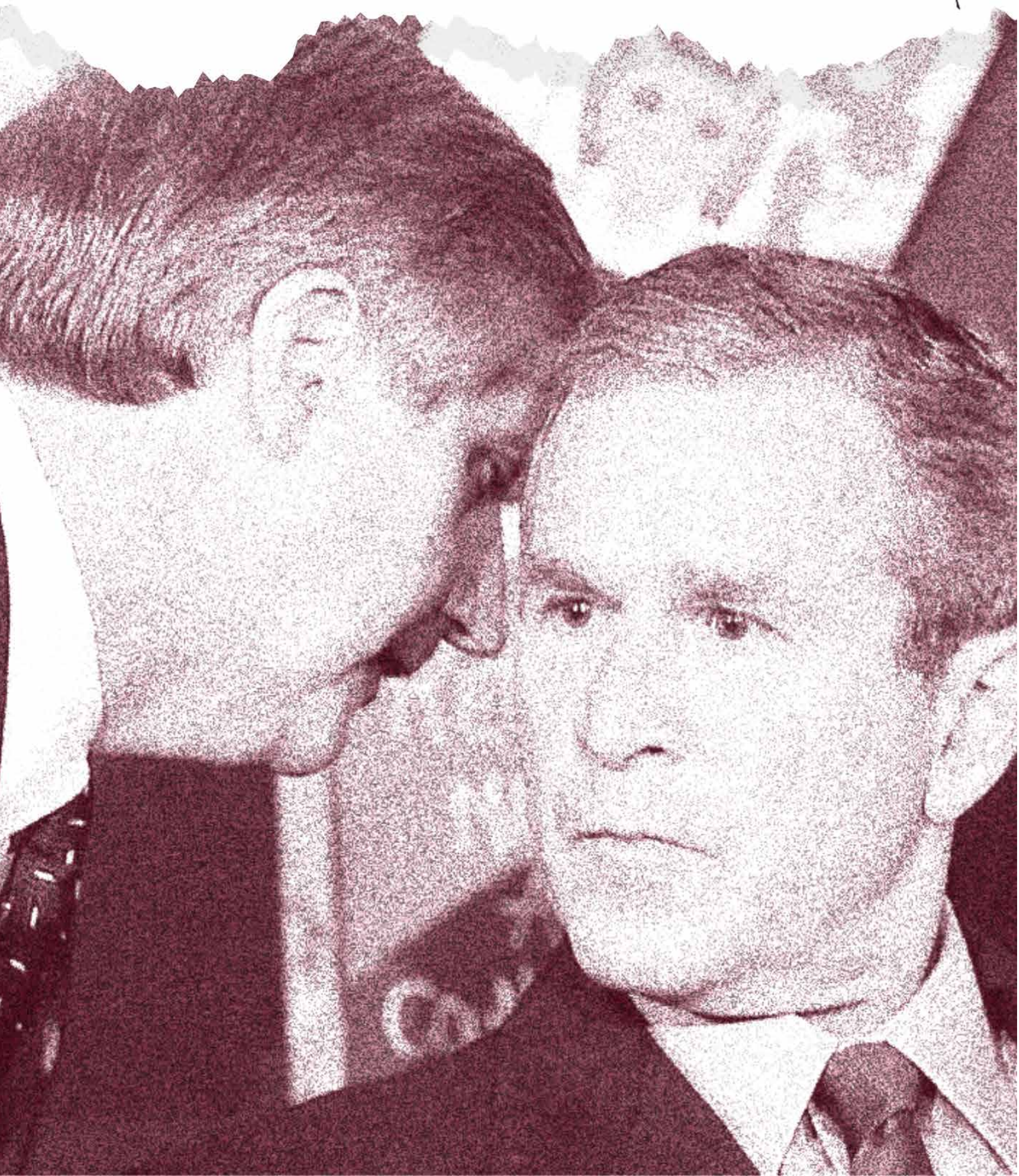


On the night of the premier, all the leading lights of the New Right had assembled at venture capitalist and Palantir co-founder Joe Lonsdale's lakeside mansion near Austin to drink champagne and eat canapés after the debut screening of Alex Lee Moyer's latest cinematic triumph. There was lobster risotto arancini with saffron aioli, puff pastry squares topped with various combinations of cheeses and preserved fruits, there were shot glasses each containing a raw egg yolk, a little horseradish and tabasco, almost like an oyster, which you were expected to slonk — and this was enough of a novelty that if the conversation ever slowed, someone would razz up one of the girls into slonking a yolk and then tease her about the face she would inevitably make, much to the delight at least of the non-homosexual males in the room.

"You *slonk* the egg?"

"...Yes, just down it one gulp. Heat denatures the cholesterol which is why it has to be raw. You must read Benjamin Braddock…"

Lonsdale had spared no expense building out his grand foyer with vaulted arches and rows of ionic columns made of Thuringian red marble. He had instructed his architects to work *within a syntax of spare classicism* and to *develop an architectural language of power* and he was pleased by the way his guests had flowed automatically from the foyer through the dramatic rectangular openings into the library and living room, which were custom-made to resemble the doorframes in the Königsplatz buildings and the House of German Art in Munich. The ceiling, reminiscent of Italian Renaissance palaces, also recalled the pine ceilings in the library and smoking room of the Old Chancellery in Berlin.

The guests for their part were pleased as well; more than once, Lonsdale heard someone exclaim that it was all just so… *fashy*! *Fashy* meant fascist but it was more of a vibe than any kind of definite political stance. *Fashy* was part of the *vibe shift*, it was anything the *regime* didn't like, but it really just meant things that normal people want, things like being able to say what a man and a woman are, being able to admit what *good schools* really meant. Basically it meant anything the *middle class* liked.

Now that was an odd phrase: *middle class*. Joe Lonsdale wasn't middle class, or was he? He was pretty sure the middle class didn't have a Persian reproduction of the famous sixteenth-century *Paradise Carpet* in their living rooms. Employing naturalistic forms, the weaver had represented deer, panthers, lions, and bulls—among other real and imaginary animals—in a landscape with cypress, pomegranate, and flowering apple trees. The dealer had told him the estimated 15.4 million knots in the carpet would have taken a lone weaver working every single day fourteen years to complete. Joe must *live a certain way.* But this was America and everyone was *middle class,* there was no aristocracy, though there was, possibly, *old money* and *new money.* Lonsdale was in tech, that made him the latter, that made him *new money* which made him *middle class*.

The film they were celebrating was a stylish half-biopic, half-documentary telling the story—what little was known, along with some timely embellishments—of Nasim Aghdam, the woman who *shot up* YouTube's headquarters in 2018 with a Smith and Wesson 9mm. Nasim was a popular figure among the *far right* because of the (merited) perception by the same that social media companies like Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Patreon, Reddit, Yelp, Instagram, Pinterest, Substack, LinkedIn, Medium, Twitch, Snapchat, and TikTok suppressed right-wing content in order to control the narrative and stifle dissident speech. Nasim, although her actions were illegal, was seen as a symbolic liberator who had struck a blow against the *woke regime-controlled* media and stood up for her principles with little to no regard for her own personal safety or well-being. We needed more people like Nasim Aghdam who were willing to take action on behalf of the constitution and the first amendment, consequences be damned.

And now this is another one of those perplexing things to Joe Lonsdale, because many of the people in this very room were investors in some of these companies—Peter Thiel had been on the board of Facebook, even—but somehow that didn't change anything about what you could or couldn't say. Everyone at the party, he expected, knew that was because of something called *Managerialism*, which is this idea that the owners of companies, the stockholders, the VCs, they don't have any control over actual business operations, and everything the company does, that's done by something called the *Professional Managerial Class*. The *PMCs*. Lonsdale thinks he might technically be a *PMC*, but if so, he's one of the good ones.

He doesn't have the *woke mind virus*.

There was something so striking about the story of Nasim Aghdam, all the little details were so delicious, the way it simultaneously affirmed *Sailer's law of female journalism* and obliquely also his dictum regarding the correlation between the race of a shooter and his (in this case, her) lethality; the fact that Nasim failed to kill any of her victims seemed to demonstrate that women can't shoot, and right-wingers know that stereotypes exist for a reason. Despite left-wing (i.e., mainstream) critics' vicious renunciations of the film, it had proved hard to critique along the expected lines. Nasim was an immigrant and a woman and a vegan, after all, and besides that she was clearly *neuro-atypical* and probably a great example of how *We Need to Take Mental Health More Seriously in This Country*. Depending on how you count and who you ask, women comprise between 2 and 0.2% all mass shooters, and Iranians—excuse me—Persians are similarly underrepresented. Throughout the film, Moyer assumes a not-quite-ironic stance where she presents Nasim as a kind of feminist anti-hero, boldly challenging stereotypes and infiltrating male spaces to speak truth to power.

Moyer was a true *auteur*, and her treatment of the subject was racially aware without being overtly racist; she had only posed the question—indirectly and by proxy through the various experts she interviewed—if the same forces of structural and systemic racism which exclude Black voices in other areas of American civil society have also caused us to discount the involvement and concerns of minority and especially bipoc, queer, female, non-white, indigenous, and non-male persons in perpetrating mass shootings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPtu5V3kHTM

Aghdam opens with warm, dreamy shots of the San Diego coastline paired with the melancholy tones of the Boomtown Rats' 1979 Irish New Wave Anthem *I Don't Like Mondays*, memorializing Brenda Spencer, the first woman active shooter, who *shot up* Grover Cleveland elementary school in the same year, played by Dasha Nekrasova in a mullet, doing her damndest to look under-age (so what's new?). The enchanting Billy-Joelesque piano arrangement reaches a crescendo as Dasha gives a wink and blows a kiss at the camera like some kind of shoujo anime girl before charging in guns akimbo and slaughtering 6 million* snot-nosed SoCal elementary schoolers in a scene reminiscent of Tarantino reminiscent of Peckinpah.

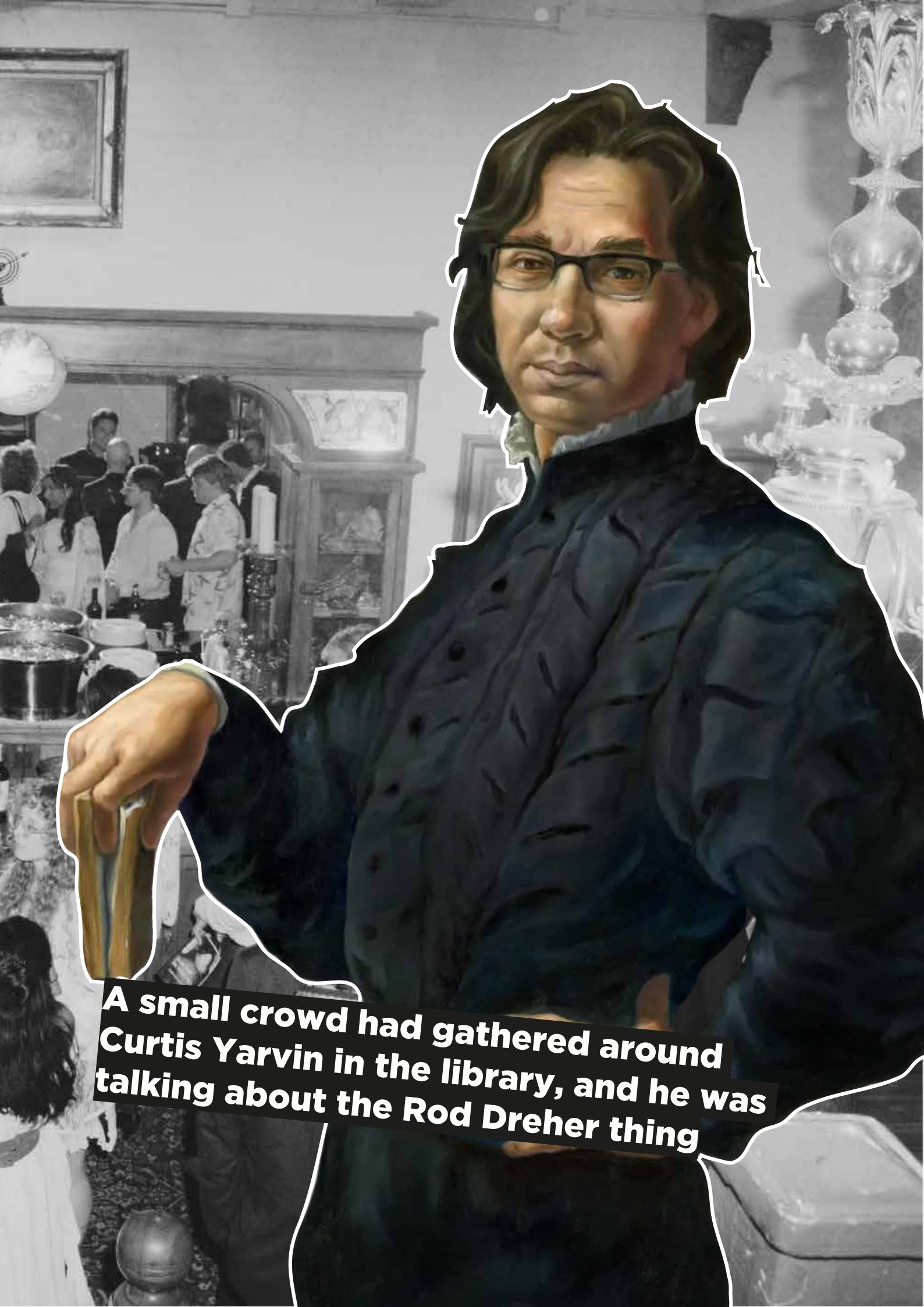
From there, Moyer goes on to interview a forgettable sociologist about the politics of what is classified as a mass shooting. The statistics can be sliced half a dozen different ways, but it's always done in a way that excludes Black shooters in particular, and this is perhaps done subconsciously, but it has the effect of centering mass shootings as a mental health issue which predominantly affects *white males*, when in fact a more honest accounting should acknowledge that there is a crisis in America regarding the mental health care of Black youths, but we can only have that conversation when we are honest about the exclusionary nature of the politics of counting mass shootings. There is a certain almost tongue-in-cheek quality to these dire, hand-wringing interviews underscored by brooding strings and keyboards and other cinematographic borrowings from the Netflix-NPR-Vox school of telling informed citizens what they're supposed to think, juxtaposed with cartoon *ultraviolence* and a kitschy soundtrack curated by NegativeXP who also went by the name *School Shooter*.

When Rod Dreher wrote a column in *The American Conservative*, condemning the film for glorifying violence and lionizing terrorists, Alex Lee Moyer had fired back in an appearance on *Rogan*, calling him a *racist* and a *sexist*, calling it a typical example of *White Male Christians* trying to *erase* non-male and non-white bodies. Whatever Moyer's intent with this remark had been, the soundbite had made its way to several legacy media outlets including Fox and CNN before anyone involved could figure out how many *levels of irony* Moyer was on.

Back at the afterparty, the lady of the hour Anna Khachiyan, who had starred in *Aghdam* as the titular (no pun intended) Aghdam, was nowhere to be found. No one had seen her at the debut, and no one seemed to know where she was. But Alex Jones was there. Malcom Kyeyune was there. Glenn Greenwald was there. Ms. [sic] Blaire White was there. So was Mike Cernovich, Amanda Milius, Michael Malice, Nick Rochefort, Nick Mullen, Niccolo Soldo, David Reaboi, Balaji Srinivasan, Mike Solana, Curtis Yarvin, Lydia Laurenson, Aella, Nina Power, Ariel Pink, The Ion Pack, Indian Bronson (under a different name,) Katherine Dee (under a different name,) and many others besides. James Poulos and Robert Mariani were there, but there was no sign of the latter's sidekick McCrump. Blake Masters and Michael Anton and Christopher Rufo had the good grace not to be there.

Malcom Kyeyune was the only Black in the place, a fact that everyone had implicitly agreed to ignore,

Moyer was talking about her next film project already...Her next movie was going to be a Hunter Biden exposé (no pun intended) in which she herself would play the role of Hunter


A small crowd had gathered around Curtis Yarvin in the library, and he was talking about the Rod Dreher thing

and if it ever came up you just had to make a joke about how he's a Swede, OK? and move on; a polite little laugh, did you know that despite being only 2% of the attendees of the party he's responsible for 52% of the racial remarks—umm, umm, ummm—but no really—the film is a masterclass in threading the needle and drawing attention to racial realities that we all need to contend with and be honest about if we are ever going to move past them and realize that most of the problems Americans perceive as being racial are also true of working-class whites.

Whatever anyone thinks about this kind of class analysis among the *anti-woke post-left*, it's undeniably got an appeal to many of them, being *former* or *reformed* Marxists themselves, this is all very sympatico. It didn't really matter if Kyeyune was Black, or if Blaire White was trans, or if Glenn Greenwald was gay. All the way back in 1906, Ambrose Bierce had written that *An African American is a n—— that votes our way* — even in his head, Lonsdale wasn't quite comfortable saying that word, it just didn't feel necessary.

A small crowd had gathered around Curtis Yarvin in the library, and he was talking about the Rod Dreher thing, the way Moyer had tried to bend back *woke* language into a *critique of wokeness*, but he is saying that using their terms —even to critique them—ultimately reinforces their power, because it gives legitimacy to the *structure of control* even though it feels like you are subverting it. Yarvin was wearing his famous leather jacket, and his wife was there next to him, but so are several other women, and most of the girls at the party were wearing some variation of Nasim Aghdam's signature outfits, which had also featured prominently in the movie, such as a metallic spandex leopard print onesie with a gold tassel rope belt and white strappy heels; a red vinyl pencil skirt and a purple shawl jacket with deep cleavage terminating below the breasts and a woven black necklace with knots; a black dress with embroidered flower sleeves and a black *cops and robbers* eyemask and Doc Martens; a vinyl metallic purple jumpsuit, black yoga pants with a solid red long-sleeve skintight top; a white zebra stripe turtleneck onesie and gold flats; or an orange satinate pirate shirt paired with green and white floral pants. Katherine Dee was carrying a small sign that said "I'm an elefriend, don't go to the circus."

Even though there was real extant footage of Nasim dancing while wearing her iconic outfits or demonstrating e.g., how to do an ab workout, Moyer and Khachiyan had recreated all of it with Anna dressed as Nasim in order to maintain a consistent visual identity for the character. The more serious or informative segments of the movie were joined by interstitials of Anna-as-Nasim dancing. Moyer uses these opportunities to introduce key vocabulary and concepts to her audience, such as *anarcho-tyranny*, which is when the rules in a system, which nominally apply to everyone, are tyrannically written and selectively enforced in order to privilege certain groups over others. Social media website moderation is a prime example of *anarcho-tyranny*, and this is especially important to understand because it factors into Nasim's motivations, into why she did what she did.

To explain this, Moyer brings in PewDiePie, the most popular YouTube content creator from 2013 to 2017, the first *YouTuber* to reach 10 billion views, and the creator of the controversial racist anthem *Bitch Lasagna*.

"I was criticized for posting what YouTube decided to call *antisemitic hate-speech*. I made some jokes about Hitler, I had two Indian guys holding a sign that said *Death to all Jews*."

Major sponsors of Youtube including the UK Government, Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, Johnson & Johnson, Mars, Adidas, HP, and Deutsche Bank pulled or paused their advertisements on YouTube.

"...Youtube started *demonetizing* channels that weren't *Family Friendly*. I didn't know who Nasim was at the time, but it was a change that hit everyone. People will say that makes it fair, it's fair if the rule is applied to everyone, but is it? A rule can be shitty and you can just hide behind saying, we were shitty to everyone. Nasim thought YouTube was targeting vegans and animal rights activists for demonetization and algorithmic deboosting. That wasn't true, but they didn't explain it to her. They didn't explain it to anyone. They didn't help her understand.

"I'm not saying what she did was justified, of course not. But these companies like YouTube, they basically have a monopoly. What are you going to post on Vimeo? It's literally a thousand times smaller. A thousand times. And no one holds these companies accountable, not governments, not content creators, not the end users. They control what we see and hear.

"I think maybe YouTube should be afraid of their creators. And Nasim, even if what she did was wrong, she believed in something higher than herself, and she was willing to pay a price for it. How many people can say that? So do I think it was right, what she did, no. I mean look at her stats, she had zero kills. It's because she's a woman, ok? You know I have played all the *Souls* games with zero *deaths*. Not zero kills, zero deaths. I beat *Elden Ring* with zero deaths!

But even if her kill count sucks, she sacrificed herself for her ideals. And if you're honest I think you have to admire that."

PewDiePie had been unable to make it to the party. Lonsdale made his way into the gallery, where Moyer herself was having a loud conversation with Michael Malice, who you would think had too much *chimpagne*, but no, he was just naturally keyed. The gallery was decorated in the German *heroic* color scheme of blue, gold and white, made famous in Wagner's operas, and it had a small portrait of Wagner, and a half-length of Bismarck by Lenbach. There were also pictures by Feuerbach, Cranach, Schwind, Zügel and Breughel. The distinctive door handles, composed of a cube attached to a cylinder, were intended to evoke the Königsplatz buildings, just like the door frames in the library. The centerpiece of the gallery was a twelve foot statue of an amazon warrior on horseback, a spear in her hand, the horse in motion.

Moyer was talking about her next film project already, she was a fountain of ideas, she was overflowing, she couldn't even rest for a minute. Her next movie was going to be a Hunter Biden exposé (no pun intended) in which she herself would play the role of Hunter, and she would tentatively call it *Nein, wir sind der Jäger!*, juxtaposing scenes of the popular anime *Attack on Titan* with uncensored and commentated found footage (no pun intended) from Hunter Biden's laptop. For the crack-smoking scenes, she intended to actually smoke real crack on camera. She was also toying with the idea of a documentary about white men named George Floyd and how their lives had changed on the aftermath of the *Summer of George*, tentative title: *The Real George Floyd*.

Malice thought these were splendid ideas and immediately launched into a tirade about how Jews and protestants are comfortable with iconoclasm in a way that Catholics are not. What comes first, Catholicism or iconolatry? Catholics fundamentally don't get how to deconstruct symbols and they aren't even very good at recognizing enemy idols, and even when they do they aren't comfortable tearing them down. What do you see when you step into a Catholic church? Icons everywhere; the proliferation of icons, they are *iconmaxing*. Jews in contrast are natural iconoclasts, it's right there in the ten commandments, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images*. When a Jew sees an idol, his first instinct is to smash it, it's just that a lot of Jews have a blindspot when they themselves are the idol. It's not that we hate jews and and blacks, ok, It's about showing that you aren't infected with their mind virus, if you can't say "gas the kikes" without flinching, if you can't demand total n—— death, look it's not about being edgy and transgressive, it's about renouncing the *American civil religion*, it's about showing that you stopped drinking that kool-aid, that you know n—— is just a word, that it doesn't hurt anyone when you say it, that it's not violence, words are just words. VIOLENCE is violence.

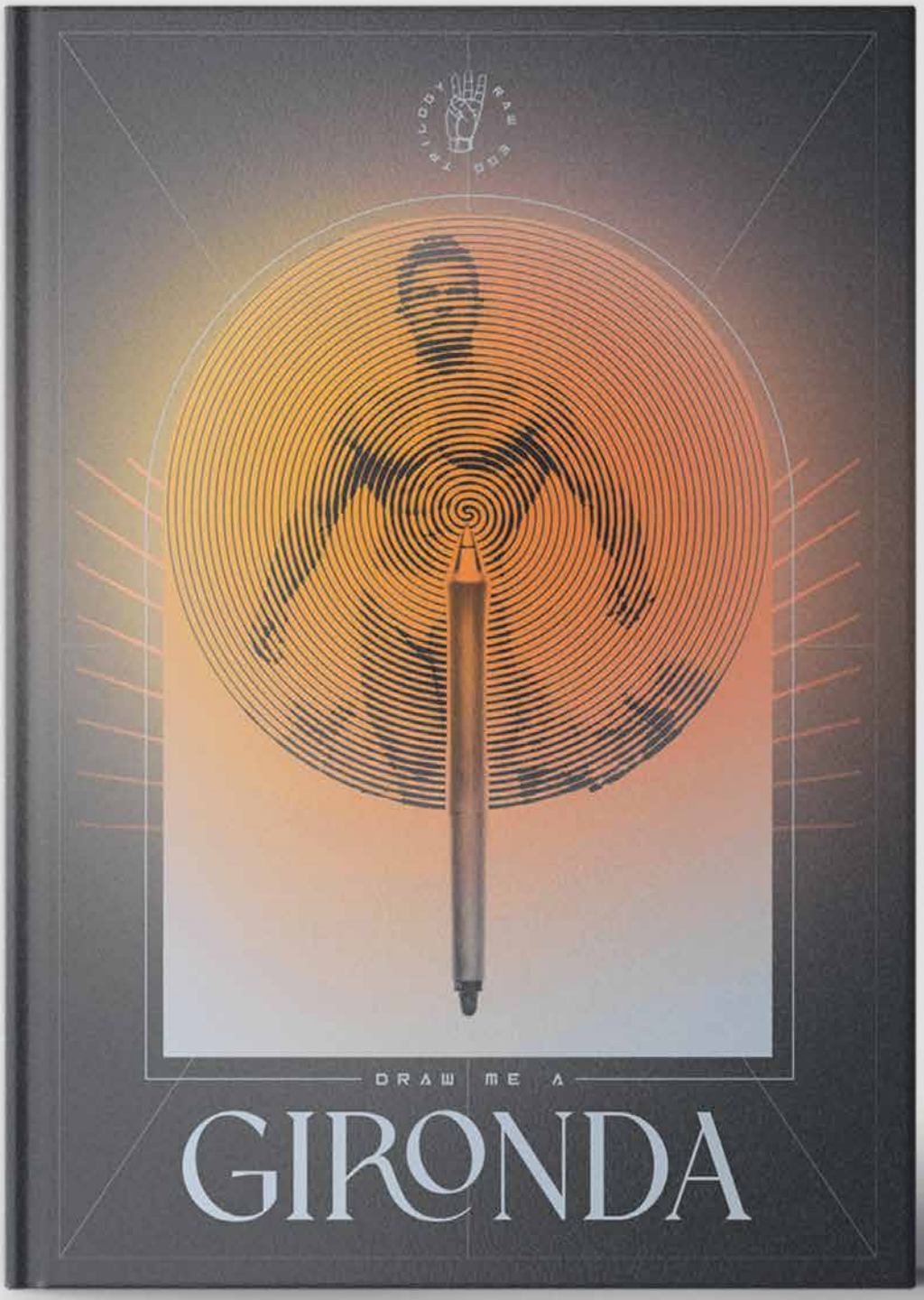
Alex Lee Moyer couldn't agree more. This was in part why she had made a point of exaggerating the violence in *Aghdam* to the point of *post-ironic* parody. *Post-irony* is different from irony, in fact it's beyond irony and sincerity. Figuring out the intentions of the ironist is easy: whatever is being shown is being mocked. But the post-ironist folds over on her own sincerity with exaggeration, using the ironic to enjoy the absurdities of what she genuinely appreciates.

One of the logistical conundrums of hosting a *fashy* party is what to do about the help. You're in a bit of a bind, because what everyone has learned is that free speech is only exactly as free as who is listening, and you need to make sure all your guests are genuinely safe to express their most honest opinions. A carefully-curated guest list is critical, but it only gets you so far, because of course there is also going to be staff around the house, taking people's coats, serving them hors d'oeuvres and drinks, and this sort of thing. It's imperative that you don't have any Black servants in the house, not because of any inherent deficiency in the Blacks *per se* but because there's always a risk that someone won't understand the nuances of *post-irony* and because society has trained Black people to chimp out when they hear certain words or ideas that were perfectly acceptable for anyone to discuss even in the recent memory of everyone who is at the party except possibly a few of the *e-girls*, who (one assumes) were still in diapers and in fact might still be owing to their sexual proclivities.

And but for the same reason you can't have any Black servants you probably also want to avoid having any white servants, because they tend to be the most mind-controlled, even more than the Blacks, the most likely to secretly record something someone said and then post it to social media etc. At least half the people here have already been *canceled* already and are now *uncancelable*, but the other half will absolutely appreciate Londsale's discretion. In the end he had settled on entirely *Latinks* waitstaff, falling back on that old chestnut *we don't care what race you are, as long as you're racist*. Not that Lonsdale or anyone else was admitting to anything on that front, in any case.

For that matter and to be honest the *e-girls* were

EGGS



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probably a bigger *opsec risk* than any of the servants. A lot of them were only *performatively red-pilled*, happy to send *fashy signals* but ultimately willing to say anything and go along with anything if it seems like that's the thing to do. Lonsdale remembers an old Scott Alexander post from all the way back in 2014, back when Nasim was still shaking her ass for traffic. He said: This isn't the type of conservatism where I agree with any conservative policies, mind you. Those still seem totally wrong-headed to me. It's the sort of conservatism where, even though conservatives seem to be wrong about everything, often in horrible or hateful ways, they seem like probably mostly decent people deep down, whereas I have to physically restrain myself from going on Glenn Beck style rants about how much I hate leftists and how much they are ruining everything. Even though I mostly agree with the leftists whenever they say something.

Joe is smart enough that when he read that, it stuck with him, in part because it made him feel *cognitive dissonance*, because he agreed with it, but then… how does that make you different from a leftist, exactly? Does *fashy* stand for *fascist*, or does it stand for *fashionista*…? *I'm not like all the other girls,* that's what it really meant. But of course they were. The thing is, it's impossible to be cool, it's impossible to be hip, when all your beliefs about society and morality are the same as those of the government, the corporations, *big-tech*, *the establishment*. You don't want to be part of the *party of Mastercard*, do you? Be a rebel against the system, join Kamala Harris, Gavin Newsom, Warner Brothers, The Walt Disney Company, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Goldman Sachs, Morgan-Stanley, Amazon, Apple, Alphabet, CVS, Exxon-Mobile, Walmart, AT&T, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, Nestle, PepsiCo, and Annheiser-Busch in supporting trans rights and overthrowing the patriarchy. But what did that rebellion constitute, in practice? Did it mean being rude to e.g. Ms. [sic] Blaire White, did it mean not inviting Malcolm Kyeyune? *A n—— that votes our way*. Maybe we can modernize Bierce and answer Matt Walsh at the same time: what is a woman? A tranny that votes our way. This line of thinking didn't sit right with Joe, left a bad taste in his mouth. A *chemically salty taste*, one could say. Wasn't fascism supposed to be the *politics of us and them*? Think of all the wasted paper and ink and time that goes into printing these vapid pundit airport books just so a phrase like *politics of us and them* can be memed into the common vernacular, hundreds of interchangeable catalogs of claptrap, read by no one, written by a ghostwriter if not an AI.

After PewDiePie's meditation, a smooth, concerned-citizen Tom Brokaw-crossed-with-Tom Scott sounding voiceover gives the audience a rundown of Nasim's history. On the 3rd of April 2018, Nasim Aghdam walked into YouTube's Headquarters located in San Bruno, California, and shot three people and then killed herself. Not much is known about Nasim's personal life prior to this incident, outside of what is publicly available on her now-removed YouTube channels. Her parents had declined to appear in the documentary, but in previous interviews they had related a story of her childhood, that she refused even to harm ants in their family home, and would instead scoop them up with paper and take them outside.

She was born in Urmia, Iran. Her parents immigrated to Iran from the Republic of Azerbaijan. In 1996 her family emigrated from Azerbaijan to San Diego. She was a lifelong vegetarian. Never married. In 2013 she received her student pilot certificate. She protested with PETA outside of Camp Pendleton against the use of pigs in United States Marine Corps training procedures for victims of trauma. She maintained several personal websites under different names, including Nasim Sabz and Nasim Aghdam. All of this is accompanied by a cinematographically predictable montage of maps, photographs, and etc, a drawing of an airplane tracing dotted lines over a globe. In 2014 she enjoyed a flicker of viral popularity on Iranian social media, and gained 8500 subscribers. Small though this number may seem today, she never recovered from this taste of social media fame. The poison was in her veins.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md_JQJO_wqY

NegativeXP's *MkUltra Victim* plays over b-roll of Anna as Nasim walking around San Bruno in some vinyl spandex number looking hot. The ascended *arthoe larping* as the chthonic *arthoe*. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis. In the days leading up to the shooting, Nasim had been sleeping in her car, a white pontiac, and the police had even stopped her at 3am the night before and captured the encounter on a bodycam. Moyer also recreated this scene for the documentary in a cartoonish, exaggerated style. The most striking thing about this reenactment is a certain uncanniness to Anna's performance. In the original police footage, Nasim betrays no hint of her impending plans, and comes across as sad, sleepy, but innocuous as she answers the questions of the police officers, explaining why she left her family, why she is in Mountainview, why she left San Diego, and so on. In the recreation,

Anna has an intensity in her eyes, a manic, violent, sexual energy—there is electricity in the air, and she is pregnant, not with a child but with death.

"Why Mountainview," they ask her, "I know it's a great city and everything, but…"

And Anna/Nasim says, "I wanted to sleep around here, I wanted to get out of those areas, out of San Diego, I have memories I don't want to have… Somewhere new… Have no memories about past…"

In light of this scene, there is something conspicuous now in Anna's continued unaccounted-for absence at the party at Lonsdale's. There was a rumor, more credible with each passing hour, that she had fallen into a vortex of method acting, dressing like Nasim, eating vegan food, making instructional fitness videos, visualizing herself as Nasim, meditating on the injustices that had been done to her. *They* were saying she started sleeping in her car, that she had purchased her own Smith and Wesson 9mm, and practiced shooting, and carried it, loaded, into an office park in San Bruno, though she did not fire it. Lonsdale didn't know if all this was true, but the possibility seemed immanent when he heard a ruckus in the gallery. Swiftly he made his way through the atrium towards the source of the noise, where the combination of colored marbles used for the living room fireplace—sand for the mantelpiece, red for the floor in front—recurred in the interior of the grand staircase. The grooved linear forms of the mantel (here and in the dining room) resembled the radiator covers in this same atrium.

Anna Khachiyan had finally arrived, talking in a heavily affected Persian accent, and she seemed like she was intoxicated but it was not exactly clear if it was from alcohol. She was wearing one of Nasim's instantly recognizable outfits, a blond wig, a see-through mesh top with embroidered black leaves on it, bright red lipstick, a green and black ballet tutu, and carrying a live rabbit. But this is almost unremarkable compared to who was with her, there were like 5 or 6 of them at once, all in black Adidas track suits with metallic green stripes and rubber frog masks over their heads. Despite the tracksuits you can see their powerful vascular quadriceps and triceps rippling underneath the *zogged* synthetic fabrics, like they walked straight out of *Handsome Thursday*. Joe Lonsdale didn't invite them, and he half suspected Anna had hired some male strippers to put on a spectacle.

One of them was standing up on a round coffee table with a dark marble top, a replica of a piece designed by Paul Troost, framed on either side by a large Flemish Gobelin containing stylized botanical and folkish motifs.The Frog is projecting his voice, speaking loudly in a heavy fake Russian accent.

"Ze fundamental faiz of the metaphyzicians ees ze faiz een anteethetical values. It hyez not occurred to even ze most cautious of them to pause and doubt here on ze dreshold, where hyowever eet was most needful they should: even eef they hyad vowed to zemselves *de omnibus dubitandum*. For eet may be doubted, feerstly whezzer dere exeezt any anteetheses at all, and syecondly whezzer dese popular evaluazions and value-anteethezez, on which ze metaphyzicians have zet zeir tseal, are not perhyapz merely foreground valuazyans, myerely proveesional perspecteeves, perhyaps moreover ze perzpecteeves of hole-and-corner, perhyeps from below, as eet were frog-perspecteeves, to borrow an exprezyon employed by painters.

"zeez zmall people like Beell Gates, Zuckerfaze, and Beezos are entirely dyependent myen. Zey can't really do weet zeir wealth what you zink dey can... for exyemple, zey could never juzt keell a myen and take heez wife, but even ruler of zmallest *Afreakan* country has zeez power, zeez true wealt. When your hyeppinezz and wealt depends on forze of arms of anozzer, you're not really your own myan...nor can you enjoy ze greatezt delights een life."

Lonsdale recognized this latter utterance as a paragraph from *Bronze Age Mindset,* this well-worn passage indicting the tech industry for its lack of virility. But Lonsdale had a different take on it, he felt that BAP was using this idea of killing a woman's husband and taking her for yourself as a metaphor for the *Principal-Agent Problem*, in other words, he was talking about *Managerialism*. The *Frog* had continued speaking while Lonsdale was reflecting on this, and when his attention came back to the speech, the only thing he heard was:

"Ze world weell not be free untyeel last faggot ees ztrangled weeth entrails of last neegger!", which Joe recognized as a paraphrase of the folk quotation documented by Meslier, so often misattributed to Denis Diderot. This, as they say, *activated the almonds*.

Malcom Kyeyune, Blaire White, and some of the (((Jews))) looked around uncomfortably; this last line was a little much. But Glenn Greenwald let out a big gay belly laugh and someone—Joe couldn't see who, maybe it was Justin Murphy—yelled out that Peter Thiel had paid for this movie, so what was he saying exactly?! But before the *Frog* could answer, someone else said that Peter Thiel might have sex with men, but he wasn't a *faggot* and everyone laughed and the conversation kept moving. But this kind of joke put everyone in a bind. You wouldn't want to be seen

27A

not laughing a joke like that, but depending whose watching, you also wouldn't want to be seen laughing at it. Some things were better left unsaid.

The final scene of *Aghdam* is a total stylistic departure from the entire rest of the film. Gone is the post-ironically cheerful soundtrack, gone are the cutesy nods and winks to the audience. The only foley is some wind and the humming of suburban buildings. The mood is stark. Moyer opts for a first person camera, evocative of a shooter game, and follows Anna's trajectory in grim silence. We hear the gunshots; we hear her victims screaming in terror. In the final moments we see her turn the gun back on herself, and the screen cuts to black with her final shot. There is no music, even as the credits roll. The gravity and the seriousness of this episode remind us that, despite the levity of Moyer's treatment of the subject matter, there is something brutal, capricious, and tragic underneath all the memes and the jokes.

Balajji Srinivasan wanted to say something, maybe something about the *Frogs*. Maybe he wasn't impressed with their little speech, with their antics, who knows? Anna has been doing some Nasim-esque dance and cooing at her rabbit the whole time they were talking. Balaji said *They're not sending their best* and then pauses, waiting for the crowd to chuckle and grin but all the celebrities and culturati are nonplussed. They give him a kind of dumb attention. They came here for the *Frogs* and to be *fashy*, and here is Silicon Valley Man wearing *Allbirds* telling them Trump jokes. But Balaji was too deep into his weird hole to get out.

He said people are desperate for a new culture primarily because they are bored by what we have now. They want something new. When people talk about the culture being stuck — movies, tv, music, books, video games, clothes, politics, everything is just a sequel to a sequel, fashion is just an endless reheating and rehashing of the last few decades of the 20th century, it's because *woke* is anti-culture, *#metoo* is an artistic paralytic, and as this cultural virus took over each of these industries in turn, it rendered creativity and innovation impossible.

Balaji said tech is the only new power and that *woke* is a strategy that existing powers are, maybe unwittingly, using to shackle tech. Restrictive cultural norms can play the same role as restrictive regulations, forming a moat around existing power structures and increasing barriers to entry for new competitors, but in this case the market is for morality and normativity, for human mental software rather than computer software. *Woke* is a kind of poison but if we can both drink poison and it kills you but it only makes me very sick, that still means I won.

The *Frogs* had been standing calmly and quietly through all this, looking like someone's private army, looking *fashy*, but suddenly one of them asked Balaji if he was really serious about disruption, and before he could answer they started jumping up and down, banging their boots on the ground, stomping and hollering, *chinping* out, chanting:

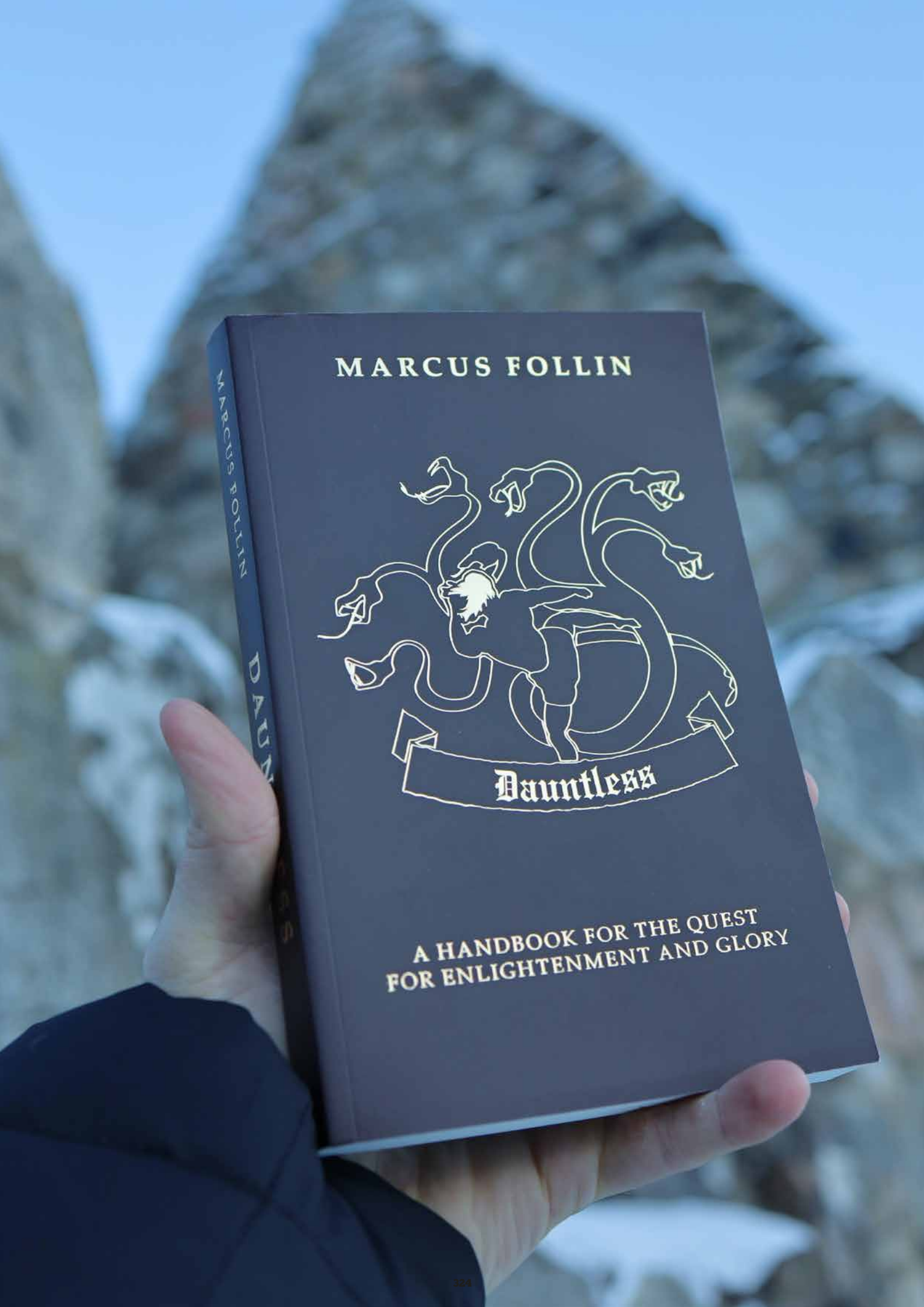
Mup Da Doo Didda
Po Mo Gub Bidda
Be Dat Tum MuhFuggen
BIX NOOD!
Cof Bin Dub Ho MuhFUGGA

They all lined up next to the colossal bronze statue of the Amazon on horseback and pushed it rhythmically.

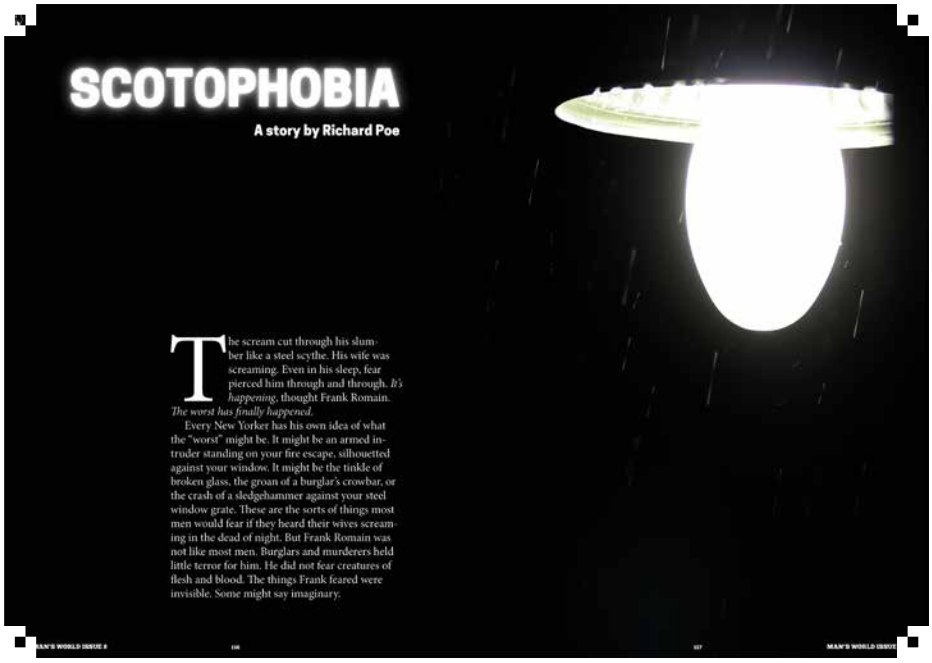
Mup Da Doo Didda
Po Mo Gub Bidda
Be Dat Tum MuhFuggen
BIX NOOOOOD!
Cof Bin Dub Ho MuhFUGGA

And the second time they shouted *BIX NOOOOOD*! the statue finally gave and tumbled over on its side, crushing one of the *e-girls*—metaphorically *trampling* her. The *Longhouse* had been defeated. Anna and Dasha were *soyfacing*. The *Frogs* all cheered and one of them pushed over a caterer and sent a whole tray of lobster risotto arancini flying, splattering all over Pedro Gonzales, staining his white shirt a deep yellow with smears of saffron aioli. How does this make you feel?

Author's Note: This is a work of satire. To the best of my knowledge, none of the people in this work have said or thought any of these things, and probably they wouldn't, who knows. By the same token, none of the views they express necessarily constitute my own views, either, I'm really just trying to capture a vibe. I intend no offense to any of these people and in fact I think of many of them quite fondly. I don't know anything about Joe Lonsdale and I mostly chose to make him the protagonist because he was in the right place at the right time and because of a vague phonetic similarity between Lonsdale and Lenny.


MARCUS FOLLIN
Dauntless
A HANDBOOK FOR THE QUEST
FOR ENLIGHTENMENT AND GLORY

GLORY TO THE BRAVE.


SCOTOPHOBIA
A story by Richard Poe
The scream cut through his slumber like a steel scythe. His wife was screaming. Even in his sleep, fear pierced him through and through. *It's happening*, thought Frank Romain. *The worst has finally happened.*
Every New Yorker has his own idea of what the "worst" might be. It might be an armed intruder standing on your fire escape, silhouetted against your window. It might be the tinkle of broken glass, the groan of a burglar's crowbar, or the crash of a sledgehammer against your steel window grate. These are the sorts of things most men would fear if they heard their wives screaming in the dead of night. But Frank Romain was not like most men. Burglars and murderers held little terror for him. He did not fear creatures of flesh and blood. The things Frank feared were invisible. Some might say imaginary.

X.

"Miranda, are you all right?" Frank cried desperately.

He had fallen into some sort of swamp or lagoon, choked with mossy fibers that clung to his skin. All around, he could hear the roar of rushing currents. It sounded as if there were rivers and waterfalls nearby, but he could not see them in the dark. Suddenly, he heard Miranda's terrified cry. "*I can't swim*!" she screamed.

"I'm coming. I'm coming," said Frank, plunging blindly in the direction of her cries. Soon, he felt her thrashing body in the darkness. He locked his arm clumsily around her neck, using a life-saving technique that he only vaguely remembered from some long-ago gym class.

Frank could just make out a shoreline of rough-hewn limestone blocks over to his left. He swam toward it. Moments later, he and Miranda lay on the stones, coughing, gasping and hugging each other, shivering with relief and terror. The darkness around them was black and deep. But a faint light glowed in the cavern. It shimmered over the water, rising and dissipating into the shadows above. What sort of light was it, Frank wondered? Where was it coming from? As his eyes slowly adjusted to the gloom, Frank peered into the ghostly glow, seeking its source. He did not have to look long. The light source was right in front of him. It was his own flashlight, which he had dropped in the fall. Now it was floating on the water, several yards from shore. Somehow, its watertight gaskets had held. Its bulb was still miraculously ablaze. With a shiver of fear, Frank realized that this flashlight was now their only hope, the only thing standing between them and total darkness.

"Honey, stay here," Frank said. "I've got to get the flashlight."

"Oh no, Frank. Please. Don't go. You don't know what's in that water."

"We've got to have the flashlight," he insisted. *Or we're lost*, his mind completed the sentence. But he didn't say that part out loud.

Lowering himself carefully into the cold water, Frank kicked away from the edge. He seized the flashlight with a triumphant flourish. Mission accomplished! But, as he turned to make his way back to shore, Frank suddenly froze in the water, paralyzed by some primitive impulse emanating from deep in his limbic brain.

In the flashlight beam, Frank could see Miranda huddled miserably on the shore, tears pouring down her face, barely ten feet away. But something else had registered in his mind, just before. What was it? Frank swung the flashlight back in a wide arc. Yes, there it was again. A metallic reflection of some sort. Two red discs, hovering on the surface of the water, catching the flashlight beam like tiny bicycle reflectors.

At first, Frank's brain drew a blank. *A boat with reflectors*? he thought dumbly. And then, like a curtain parting in his mind, he remembered where he had seen this before. It was in a PBS documentary on television, a beautiful, haunting scene of the Florida Everglades at night, lit with dozens of pairs of tiny red disks, the reflective eyes of alligators lying low in the water, stalking their prey.

Alligators.

What followed next was a barrage of sensory input too overwhelming for Frank's conscious mind to absorb. He was hardly aware of the red eyes darting straight toward him, at terrifying speed. He barely noticed Miranda screaming on the shore, or the ache of his own muscles as he thrashed through the water, powered by a mighty surge of adrenalin. The only thing Frank really noticed was the flashlight, clenched in his hand. His iron grip never slackened for an instant. His nerves understood, even if his mind did not, that, if he lost that flashlight now, he would die in the everlasting darkness beneath New York City.

XI.

It seemed only a second before Frank was back at the shoreline, with the flashlight in hand. Miranda pulled frantically on his arms, as Frank heaved himself out of the water. Some inner calculation told

Frank, however, that he had not swum fast enough. The monster was too close behind him. Frank winced in anticipation of the pain. At any moment, he expected the beast to close its jaws on his still-dangling legs.

Miranda screamed.

Frank heard behind him the sharp, wet slap of the alligator's jaws snapping shut. It had missed him! Frank scurried from the water's edge, the flashlight still clenched in his hand. The monster glared at him from the water. It was easily fourteen feet long. Converging on them from every direction, Frank saw at least a dozen more pairs of shiny red disks coursing through the murk, their lashing tails making oily reflections in the water. Frank's voice was so hoarse from screaming, it was hardly more than a whisper. "Miranda," he croaked. "*Run*."

Once more, PBS came to Frank's rescue. In that crucial split second, he remembered watching a National Geographic special about Nile crocodiles. He remembered how they stalked their prey. When they spied a wildebeest drinking at the riverbank, they would move in silently for the kill, gliding up close, then leaping right out of the water to grab their quarry from the shore. Frank learned from that special that crocodiles can jump. He later learned that alligators have that same ability.

"*Run*!" Frank cried.

The beast's terrible lunge nearly got them. They escaped by mere nanoseconds. The creature reared almost six feet from the water, snapping its jaws and landing on the shore with a loathsome, wet splat. Frank knew what was coming next. He knew that alligators could run up to twenty miles per hour on dry land, at least for short bursts, faster than any Olympic sprinter.

"Come on!" cried Frank, grabbing Miranda's hand. His flashlight wobbled crazily, illuminating a hellish tableau of red eyes, rough heads and scaly forelegs slapping out onto the stone shoreline. A brief sweep of the flashlight beam showed Frank the only way out, a thin, corbelled archway about five yards back from the water's edge. "Come on!" Frank cried again.

They slipped and slid through the opening, like baseball players skidding into home plate. An alligator plunged its muzzle through the archway, right behind them. The monster snapped its jaws, only inches from Miranda's kicking legs. She scrambled away on her back, kicking and screaming, her sneakers pounding against the alligator's jaws. In another moment, the creature would have her. But strangely, it did not pounce. It was stuck in the archway. Its scaly shoulders were too wide to fit through the opening. For one long, delirious moment, Frank and Miranda lay hypnotized, staring at those immense jaws snapping and straining like some demonic wind-up toy. Then they were on their feet and running for dear life.

XII.

Frank lost track of how long they'd been running. They emerged into a narrow corridor which split in two directions, to the left and right. They would have to choose which way to go. For a moment, they stood panting.

"Do you think they got through?" asked Miranda breathlessly. "The alligators?"

Frank shook his head. "I don't think so," he said.

Miranda sank heavily to the damp stone floor and shook her head. "How?" she said at last. "How could it be?"

Frank joined her on the floor. Both of them were soaked, and beginning to feel a chill. Frank put his arm around her.

"Pets," he said, his voice strangely distracted. "People buy baby alligators as pets. When they get too big, their owners flush them down the toilet. Some survive in the sewer system."

"I thought that was just a story," said Miranda, panting.

Frank nodded. Miranda was right. It was just a story. Technically speaking, it was an "urban folk belief." Frank had once written a paper about New York's alligator-in-the-sewer stories for Professor Russell Isherwood's urban folklore course.

"The legend of alligators supposedly living in the sewers of New York City," Professor Isherwood had lectured, "is one of the clearest examples we have of mythic formation in the modern city. It begins, as do all folk legends, with a rumor or proto-legend, in this case a series of sensational, but entirely groundless, press reports in the 1930s. Then begins the process of *communal re-creation*. Each time the story is passed from barstool to barstool, it grows a little in the telling. Each narrator adds his own embellishments, until finally we have a fullfledged urban folk belief, a tall tale which thousands, perhaps millions of people believe to be true, despite..." and here Professor Isherwood chuckled, "despite a complete lack of corroborating evidence."

But Professor Isherwood had been wrong. Those early newspaper reports had been far from "groundless." When Frank researched his paper, he found a plethora of well-documented accounts of alligators caught in the Bronx River dating back to 1932, and even one report of a seven-and-a-half foot specimen killed and retrieved from a Harlem sewer in 1935. A red-faced Professor Isherwood had given Frank a "C" for the paper. He added an angry marginal note urging Frank to be "a little less ingenuous, in future,

in your assessment of primary sources."

Frank was more careful what he wrote after that. But the real lesson he learned was that the experts didn't know everything. Even the learned Dr. Isherwood had yet to discover that legends were not always fantasies.

"There's got to be a way out of here," Miranda was saying. "Frank, are you listening?"

Frank was not listening. His mind was following a train of thought that he did not want to follow. The idea of giant alligators living in the sewer was strange. But no one could deny that it was *possible*, at least in the physical, biological sense. Ditto, Frank thought, for the four-inch cockroaches that came leaping from the top of his cupboard. Ditto for the limestone megaliths buried beneath the streets of New York. Unlikely, yes. Impossible, no. All of these things could theoretically exist in the real world.

But something else couldn't, Frank realized. The staircase in the wall. What a fool he had been. Frank had seen the problem, but had chosen to ignore it. The spiral staircase was at least six feet wide. But the wall itself was only six inches thick. The staircase could not possibly fit inside the wall. Yet there it was, all the same. The staircase was unnatural. It violated physical laws. And that could only mean one thing. Reality had cracked tonight. Like the poor lost souls in Welsh legend who followed pixie lights into the bog, Frank and Miranda had strayed from the path. They had wandered like fools into the midnight realm of the other world. And, in that world — despite all the easy assurances of a thousand Professor Isherwoods in their classrooms — Frank knew that anything could happen. *Anything*.

"Do you... hear something?" Frank said at last, his voice feeble and hoarse.

"Just my heart beating," said Miranda.

"No. Stop and listen. There's something... down there." Frank gestured vaguely toward the blackness down the corridor to their left.

For what seemed a geological age, Frank and Miranda held perfectly still and listened. Only after their hearts quieted and their breathing had grown more regular could they begin to make out the sound. It was faint and far away, a rustling, dragging noise, like an army of wet scarecrows shuffling down a paved street. It was coming from the tunnel on the left. And it was coming toward them.

"What is that?" Miranda whispered, her eyes incandescent.

Frank tried to say something, but his voice would not come. His arms and legs shook like rags in the wind. His bladder felt painfully full. Frank forced himself to his feet and pulled Miranda up alongside him.

"We've got to go," Frank finally managed to squeak. "That way. Quick."

With a trembling arm, Frank indicated the only direction left open to them, down the tunnel to the right.

"What is it, Frank?" Miranda asked when they had jogged about 50 yards down the passage. "Is it the alligators?"

"No," Frank replied. "I think it's something worse."

XIII.

Even as he and Miranda hurried down the dark limestone passageway, Frank's mind drifted back to a dreary afternoon spent doodling in his notebook while Professor Isherwood expounded on the intricacies of Iroquois folklore. Frank remembered this as one of Isherwood's more tedious lectures. The professor's mind seemed to be wandering that afternoon. Perhaps the old man was getting senile, Frank had thought, at the time.

According to the class syllabus, Isherwood was supposed to be lecturing on urban folk beliefs in the New York metro area. Yet, for some reason, he had veered off topic, maundering on about some archaic superstitions of the Iroquois Indians. Frank knew that the Iroquois were a woodland people whose traditional lands lay west of the Hudson River, hundreds of miles upstate. As far as Frank knew, they had never set foot anywhere near the New York City area. So why was Isherwood talking about them? Frank scribbled furiously in his notebook, covering the page with whorls and curlicues, and digging deep, angry furrows with his ball-point pen.

Had Frank been listening more closely, he would have understood the reason for Professor Isherwood's digression that day. The professor had already explained that many Iroquois people had migrated down to the city from upstate New York, during the 1920s and '30's. Mostly they were Mohawks, looking for construction work. Mohawk ironworkers had built many of Manhattan's most famous bridges and skyscrapers. When they came to the city, they brought their folklore with them. Frank had missed that part of the lecture. He was too busy doodling. He filled many pages, that day, with squiggles, coils and geometric shapes. But, in the midst of his doodling, something caught Frank's attention. It was something Professor Isherwood had said. Something important. Frank stopped in mid-doodle and eyed the professor.

"The cannibal skeleton is perhaps the most frightening bogey of Iroquois legend," Isherwood was saying. "Technically speaking, it is a type of vampire or revenant, a dead person who returns to feed

upon the living. The Iroquois people of upstate New York conceived of this creature as a skeleton, which would come to life by night and feast on human flesh. It goes by many names. The Mohawks called this creature *rahskahn*." Professor Isherwood pronounced the word somewhat differently than the way he wrote it on the chalkboard. He pronounced it LUS-kin.

Suddenly Frank was all ears. Instinctively, he sensed the importance of the professor's words. Frank forgot his doodling, leaned forward, and stared at Isherwood with piercing intensity. The *rahskahn* feared light, Isherwood told the class. It feared any kind of light, whether sunlight by day or campfires by night. Many Indian legends told of people pursued by the *rahskahn* who found refuge in some friendly village. In the light of the village fire, the monster could not touch them.

That was a good thing to know. But Professor Isherwood had said something else that afternoon. Frank was sure it was something important. But he could not remember what it was. As he raced down the dark passageway, beside Miranda, Frank strained to remember. He forced himself to think back on that long-ago afternoon, reconstructing every detail in his mind's eye. He visualized Dr. Isherwood standing before the class, in his trademark Scottish tweeds. Frank could see the professor's lips moving, just as they had moved that day. But what was he saying? Suddenly, Frank remembered.

"Don't look back," he gasped to Miranda.

"What?" she cried.

"Whatever you do," Frank panted, "don't look back."

XIV.

They had been jogging now for some time. Frank's glasses bounced over his face, held only by the loose nylon strap. Ahead of them, the flashlight beam played across the stones. The flashlight was running low on power. Its diminishing glow revealed only an endless, curving tunnel ahead.

All at once, the tunnel came to an end. It opened into a wide hall, whose ceiling had ruptured in some archaic cataclysm. Great lintels drooped from the roof like fallen giants. Tons of stone and rubble had poured in through the broken ceiling. A great pile of rubble blocked their way.

"We're stuck," said Miranda desperately. "It's a dead end."

Frank played his beam over the rubble heap. The stone pile rose all the way to the ceiling. At the top of the heap, he saw something promising. There was an opening in the ceiling. Pressure from the earth had pried two ceiling lintels apart, opening a gap between them. The gap was no bigger than a crawlspace. But a crawlspace was better than nothing. "We've got to climb," said Frank. "All the way to the top."

Without hesitation, Miranda scrambled up the rock pile. The stones were huge. Many had razor-sharp edges where they had fractured. The stones slashed and cut their skin as they climbed, leaving a bright trail of blood. Both had reached the limits of their strength. As they neared the summit of the rubble heap, Frank could hear once again those dragging, scratching sounds approaching from behind. They were closer now. Much closer. The damp breeze wafting in from the tunnel stank with a charnel-house reek. At the smell of it, Frank's strained bladder finally let go.

"Oh God, oh God, oh God," Frank babbled, his voice squeaking out several octaves higher than normal, as if he had inhaled helium.

"Frank, come *on*!" Miranda cried from above.

She had reached the top, and began squeezing up into the crawl space, through the gap in the ceiling lintels. Frank was right behind her.

"It's a passage, Frank. It goes further," Miranda called. She hoisted herself up through the ceiling, and crouched at the opening, waiting for Frank. He could see her beckoning, urging him on. He could almost touch her now. Yet, he was moving so slowly. Frank's muscles seemed like water. It took him forever to crawl over each jagged slab.

"Ahhhhhhhhh!"

Frank's scream pierced the darkness. A shiver of pain lashed up his leg. He had twisted his ankle. Even worse, the flashlight had tumbled from his hand and lodged itself just out of reach between two immense stone slabs.

"Oh no!" cried Frank. "I dropped the flashlight. I can't believe it." As he groped frantically between the giant stones, Frank was only vaguely aware that he was crying, sobbing, babbling and moaning like a lunatic.

"I can't believe it! I can't believe it!" he gasped in his high, helium voice.

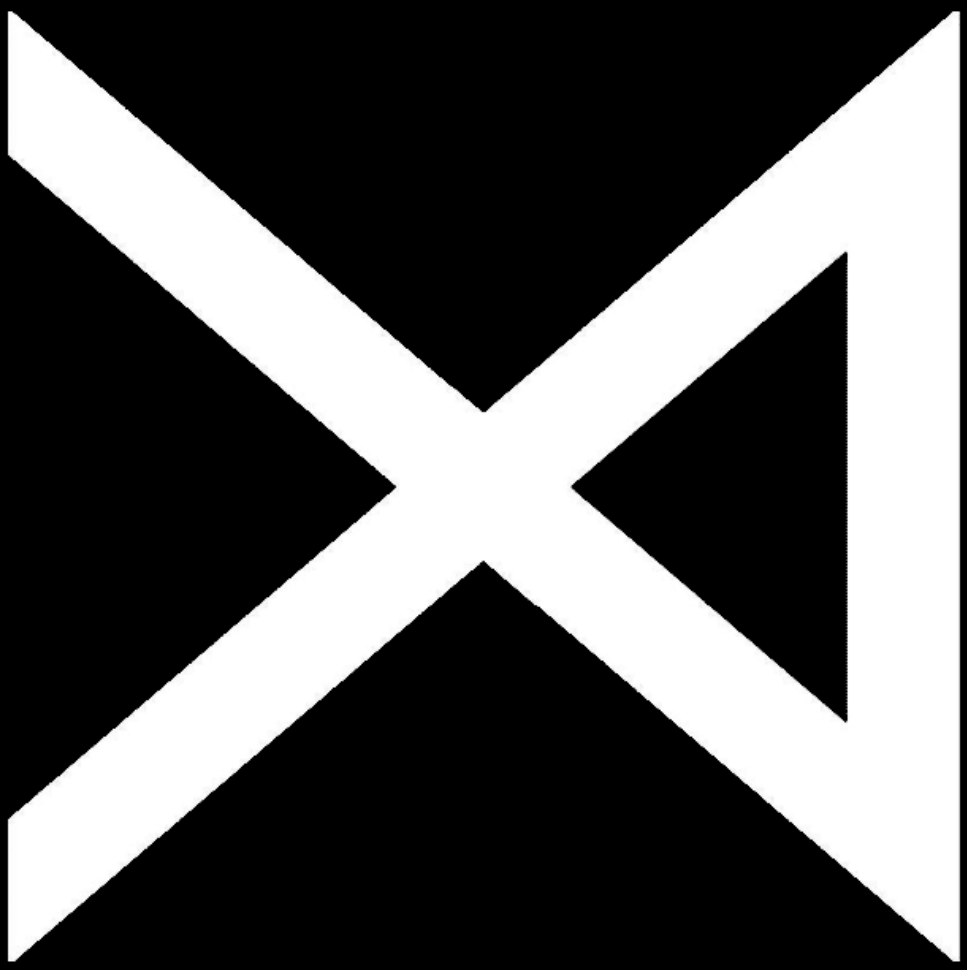
"Oh Frank, hurry. Please hurry," Miranda was saying.

Then, all of a sudden, Miranda stopped talking. There were two or three long seconds of deathly silence, just long enough for Frank to start wondering what had happened to her.

When he looked up, he saw Miranda's face frozen, her eyes staring beyond him, wide as saucers, her lips quivering in fear. *She sees something*, Frank thought numbly. *She's looking at something right behind me*.

And then she screamed. In the diffuse corona of light filtering up from the fallen flashlight, Frank noted blankly and without emotion that Miranda had fallen to her

NATURA



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knees, that her eyes bulged from her head as if they would fall out, that she screamed so hard, gobs of drool trailed from her mouth. She screamed again and again and again, until she ran out of breath. Then she raked in more air with a great, gasping wheeze and started screaming again.

Don't look back, said a quiet, urgent voice inside Frank's head. *Whatever you do, don't look back.*

It was all around him now, that fetid stench like a week-old carcass exploding with maggots. He could hear them too, not just the brittle clatter of their bony feet, but a whispering, breathing sound like the hiss of a snake, issuing from a hundred throatless mouths. Frank could hear the clitter clatter of their bony mandibles, as they worked their jaws and clicked their teeth.

Don't look back, said the gentle voice inside him.

"I won't, I won't," Frank squealed in his helium voice. Frank's ears told him his pursuers were at the bottom of the rock pile now. He could hear their hands and feet skittering on the stones like clothes pins. They were climbing up toward him.

"Frank!" Miranda screamed at last, finding her voice. "They're coming! They're right behind you!"

I know, I know, thought Frank. *Please God, give me strength. Just give me a chance. One more chance. Let me reach the flashlight this time.* Every ligament in his arm seemed to strain to the breaking point. A nasty pop in his shoulder sent fresh waves of pain raking down Frank's back. But he reached the flashlight. His fingers closed around it. "*Thank God*," he breathed. Clutching the flashlight, Frank vaulted back up the rubble heap, springing toward Miranda's beckoning arms. With a mighty yell, he jammed his torso into the narrow crawl space. Miranda pulled him through. His twisted ankle and shoulder sent bolts of pain shooting through his body.

Then came another feeling. Something hard, knobby and sharp gripped his ankle and squeezed like a vice. With a scream of animal terror, Frank kicked backwards with his other foot. His Reebok sneaker smacked into something yielding and brittle like seashells. Then his foot was free and he scrambled up through the crawl space.

For the briefest of seconds, Frank broke his own rule and allowed himself one look backwards. He wished that he hadn't.

"Oh no," Frank sobbed. "Oh no, oh no, oh no."

In his mind, the words formed slowly, almost unctuously. *It's here*, said the voice. *After all these years. The worst is finally here.*

Frank might have remained where he was, mesmerized by the gruesome spectacle below, until it was too late. But a sudden, painful slap across the back of his head shocked him from his stupor.

"Frank, come on!" Miranda screamed, tugging at his arm.

The passage sloped upward. Whatever earthquake or cataclysm had caused the ceiling to collapse long ago had also pried open a wide crack in the earth, opening a passage upward through the ceiling. A narrow chimney of broken stone and crumbling cement rose unevenly aloft. Frank and Miranda scampered up this crevice in a blind panic, neither daring to look backwards again.

XV.

Frank had worked enough archaeological digs in Manhattan to know that the city was built like an iceberg. Much of it was hidden underground. Beneath its pavement lay a labyrinth of tunnels and conduits that would have baffled Daedalus. Subway passages honeycombed the earth as deep as 75 feet, accompanied by air vents, utility rooms and sewer drains. There were water mains as wide as interstate highways, gas pipes as big as railway tunnels, phone lines, fiber-optic cables, insulated high-voltage wires, and old pneumatic mail tubes from the 1930s. There were even underground rivers like old De Voor's Mill Stream that still gurgled under United Nations Plaza and emptied into the East River through a culvert, hidden from sight since they paved over the creek in 1854.

All around him, Frank knew, there was light and life thrumming in the earth. Even at this hour, crowds of people were milling on subway platforms, in the busier stations. Frank and Miranda needed only to find one. But time was running out. The flashlight was fading. Its yellow glow had begun flickering. Soon its batteries would fail completely, and they would be alone in the dark.

As they climbed upward through the crevice, Frank was never sure whether he was laughing or crying, whether the prayers, sobs and moans that filled the air came from his throat or Miranda's. He only knew that he couldn't stop, that he had to keep going, no matter what.

Suddenly, as they pushed their way upward through a thickening forest of pipes, conduits and cement casings, Frank heard a blessed sound. It was far away, at first, muffled by the rubble and stone. But then it grew louder, swelling into a mighty roar that shook the earth.

"It's a subway!" cried Frank, with an hysterical giggle.

The train passed quickly, but now they heard others, more distantly, to the right, to the left, above and below. They were surrounded on every side by subway tubes. And, in those passages, Frank knew, they would find

lights, noise, crowds. They would find salvation.

XVI.

Their climb led them to a massive cement cylinder. It was cracked at the top, offering just enough room for a person to squeeze through and get inside.

"It's a sewer pipe," Frank said, picturing in his mind the schematics from the Transit Authority which he scrutinized before every deep excavation. "If we follow it, it should lead to access points to get into the subway tunnels. But we have to get inside the pipe. We have to squeeze through that crack."

With bleeding hands, they burrowed like dogs, working desperately to clear the earth and rubble from the crack.

"They're coming," Miranda said quietly.

Frank knew. He could smell them. Their graveyard reek overpowered even the stench from the sewer. As Frank pawed away the last bit of earth from the opening, he tried hard not to remember what he had seen in the flashlight beam during that horrid moment when he had forgotten the rule and looked back. Finally, the crack in the sewer pipe was laid bare.

"Get in! Quick!" he cried.

It seemed to take aeons for Miranda to lower herself into the pipe. Frank plunged in right behind her.

XVII.

The sewer pipe offered barely enough room for Frank and Miranda to crouch. They scurried crab-like up its long, sloping length, foul water gurgling over their ankles. Both of them jumped when they heard a soft splash behind them in the tunnel. Then they heard another splash. And another. They were no longer alone in the sewer pipe. *Don't look*, said the voice in Frank's head. They ran.

Frank and Miranda came to a round, cement well leading straight up about ten feet. Steel rungs in the well allowed them to climb to the top, which was sealed by a manhole cover. When he rode the subways, Frank often noticed such manhole covers lying between the tracks. He knew that city workers used these openings to climb down to lower levels, buried deep beneath the train tunnels. Now, for the first time in his life, Frank was seeing one of these manhole covers from the other side, from underneath. But he knew where they led. If he could get this one open, it would lead them to safety.

"We're right under a subway tunnel," said Frank. "I'm sure of it. That manhole up there opens right onto the tracks." Frank siezed the rungs and scampered quickly up to the top of the well. But when he reached the manhole cover, he could not push it open. It was padlocked shut.

"Frank, they're coming!"

He fell with a splash into the filthy sump below, sending a new spasm of pain shooting from his sprained ankle.

"Run!" Frank cried.

And so they did. Ages seemed to pass before they reached another access point. Frank's injured ankle and shoulder exploded with pain. His throat burned. His muscles sagged. *Last chance*, he thought. *If this door doesn't open, we're finished.*

Once again, they climbed up the metal rungs. This time, they did not find a manhole at the top, but a door. It was a square, steel hatch, opening sideways. It was unlocked. Frank flung the door wide, motioning for Miranda to go through first. Frank followed her, slamming the hatch behind them.

Wonder of wonders, the door opened directly onto a subway platform. The walls around them gleamed with metallic, Day-Glo graffiti. Naked lightbulbs bathed the tracks in soft light. There were four sets of rails, running side by side, separated by rows of steel pillars. But strangely, there were no lights on the platform. It looked dark and deserted. "Where are the people?" said Miranda.

Gasping, limping and wheezing, Frank and Miranda fled to the far end of the platform hoping to find a staircase to the street. Their hearts sank when they saw the exit sealed by a steel gate. It was shut tight with chains and padlocks. The station was abandoned. The exits were blocked. Frank staggered backwards from the padlocked gate, his mind reeling in panic.

Suddenly, Frank felt a hand on his shoulder. His heart leapt. He cried out in fear. Then, amazingly, he heard a man's voice, speaking to him.

"Hey, buddy, take it easy!" said the man. "You almost fell off the platform." The man wore the orange vest and yellow hard hat of a Transit Authority worker. "You okay?" he asked. "How'd you two get down here, anyway? This station is closed. You shouldn't be here."

Frank grabbed him by the vest. "How can we get out of here?" Frank gasped.

"Huh?" said the man.

That was the end of their conversation. Frank heard a loud bang, as the steel hatch slammed open. The creatures had arrived.

XVIIII.

Don't look, cried the voice in Frank's head. But it was too late. His eyes were riveted to the open hatch.

When the first one leaped into the station, Frank had the puzzling impression that he was seeing

some kind of giant bug. It moved with the jittery stride of an insect, its feet clattering on the cement like chitinous knobs. But Frank knew this was no bug. As hard as it was for his mind to grasp, Frank knew that this thing had once been a man.

From its naked bones hung strands of moldering flesh. A rancid mop of red hair clung to its skull, tied back in some obscene parody of a pony tail, such as might have been fashionable in colonial New York more than 200 years ago. Like a wary mantis, the skeleton jerked its head stiffly about, seeming to sniff the air. It looked to the left, to the right. Then it looked straight at Frank. Its jaw sagged in a wild grin. Its toes and fingers flexed like claws. Liquid ran over its teeth and dripped to the floor. It was drooling.

Others followed quickly behind it. One by one, they jumped through the door. Scores of them. Maybe hundreds. There seemed no end to the ghastly parade. Some wore wilted feathers in their long black hair. Others sported high-topped boots from the Dutch era or tattered pinstripes from the 1940s. Before Frank's unbelieving eyes walked the hideous bones of Algonquin braves, Dutch patroons, Tammany Hall bosses and society ladies dressed for their Gilded Age salons. All alike had found a common fate in the tunnels beneath Manhattan. Some were mere skeletons. Others had patches of skin, stretched here and there over their bones. A few had eyeballs, rolling deliriously in their skulls. And some had black, swollen tongues licking at their ruined lips. Their jaws worked hungrily as they fanned out across the subway platform. Dulled to a stupor by the extravagant horror before him, Frank realized too late that the fiends were fanning out in all directions, cutting off their escape.

Frank and Miranda backed away slowly, toward the edge of the platform. The city transit worker stood rigid in shock, unable to believe what he was seeing. This proved to be his undoing. While the man hesitated, the red-haired skeleton with the pony-tail lunged at him with startling speed. The creature caught the man by the neck and sank its teeth into the man's throat. It gnawed like an animal, with a great noise of ripping, tearing and crunching. An army of shuffling revenants surrounded the transit worker. They tugged and pulled till every part came loose. Arms and legs popped from their sockets. The man's head tumbled to the floor with a hollow thump. Skeletal fingers cracked open his rib cage and fumbled greedily at his internal organs. In moments, they had torn the man to pieces, gulping down his flesh with wet, slobbering sounds, and lingering over his bones, which they gnawed and crushed in their teeth. When nothing remained but scraps and blood on the floor, many of the skeletons crouched like dogs on all fours, scraping the concrete with their teeth and licking with their black tongues.

Frank and Miranda screamed themselves hoarse. Their bodies shivered and shook. Their minds went blank. Very soon, the creatures had finished their meal. They had eaten well. But they were still hungry. As Frank and Miranda watched, scores of dead eyeballs and empty eye sockets turned slowly in their direction. Dead jaws gaped open. Blood and fat dripped from their teeth. The soft, hissing breath of the creatures filled the station. Then, as if on cue, they attacked, all at once. The skeletons leaped at Frank and Miranda from every direction, their bony feet clattering on the concrete. With a scream of terror, Frank and Miranda jumped off the platform, and fled across the tracks. But there was nowhere to run.

"Frank, look!" cried Miranda.

Far down the tunnel, Frank could see an approaching light. It was a train approaching their station. But it was not going to stop. It was hurtling straight through, on the express track, at high speed. Stumbling over the rails, Frank and Miranda hurried toward the oncoming light, screaming and waving their arms. As they crossed the local track, they nearly tripped over the third rail, with its deadly high-voltage current. "Help us!" they cried. "Stop! Please help us!"

But the express train did not even slow down. When it rushed through the station, a cushion of compressed air socked Frank and Miranda full in the face, shoving them rudely aside, so that they almost lost their footing. Rows of windows filled with blank faces and unseeing eyes hurtled past in the darkness. Then the train was gone. Once again, Frank and Miranda were alone in the station.

XIX.

Looking back toward the platform, Frank was puzzled for a moment. Where were the ghouls? Had they fled? Not a single creature could be seen.

Then, slowly, stealthily, they emerged from the shadows. Like cockroaches startled by a light, they had melted into the darkness at the train's approach. But now that the train had passed, the skeletons surged forward with renewed force. Like swarming insects, they poured over the platform onto the tracks, spreading out and advancing on Frank and Miranda, their jaws dripping.

Dazed and weary, Frank could only watch in nauseous horror as the creatures drew close. It occurred to him that, if he and Miranda ran the rest of the way across the tracks and vaulted onto

the opposite platform, they might even now find an open stairway to the street. But when he turned in that direction, Frank saw it was blocked. The far platform was aswarm with ghouls. The creatures had slipped in quietly from a manhole on the other side. Frank and Miranda were cut off. Surrounded.

"Frank, look out!"

In the split second before it struck, Frank caught only a glimpse of bone, a smear of desiccated flesh, the moldy remnants of an Algonquin warrior's 400-year-old buckskin leggings, and a mass of long, black hair crawling with maggots. Then the creature struck. It grabbed him by the neck, drawing Frank's helpless face to its own. Its fingers locked about Frank's throat. For a long time, it regarded him with its lifeless eye sockets. Then the creature spread its jaws agape, cocked its head slightly askew and sank its teeth painfully into either side of Frank's face. Its jaws locked over his cheeks and sank deep. The scream that issued from Frank's throat at that moment was more animal than human.

All at once, the jaws released him. The creature stumbled backward, letting Frank go. Miranda had leapt onto the monster's back and caught it in a full nelson. The ghoul swung around, throwing Miranda clear. Before Frank's unbelieving eyes, Miranda swayed and tottered over the tracks, struggling in vain to keep her balance.

She's going to fall on the third rail, Frank thought numbly.

And she did. With a mighty crack and a bolt like lightning, 625 volts of electricity blasted Miranda's body through the air like a rag doll. She landed on the southbound express track, lying very still. Light trails of smoke laced upwards from her charred skin. A smell of burnt ozone sliced the air.

"No!" Frank cried. "Oh, Miranda, no!"

He rushed to Miranda's side, forgetting the blood that poured from his face, forgetting the ghouls that milled in the shadows. Cradling Miranda's limp body in his arms, Frank wept and gibbered like a madman. It was several long seconds before he gained the presence of mind to check Miranda's pulse. Faint and unsteady, it was unmistakably there. Miranda was alive. At least, she would be alive for the next few seconds, until the skeletons closed in.

Let me die before she does, Frank prayed. *That's all I ask. Don't make me watch her die*.

From the corners of his eyes, Frank sensed rather than saw the bony predators converging from every direction, heard their hissing breath, smelled their foul flesh. Frank rose to his feet, gripping his flashlight like a mace and waiting for the first attack.

Then a strange thing happened. The ghouls did not attack. They halted suddenly, seeming to sniff the air. As if on some unseen signal, they withdrew all at once, slinking away beneath the shadowy eaves of the station platform, or hiding behind the steel columns dividing the tracks. Frank stood for a moment bewildered, waving his flashlight aloft. *Surely*, thought Frank, *they're not running away from me and my flashlight*.

He was right. The skeletons were not running from Frank. They were hiding from something far more formidable. Frank noticed the checkered shadows of the columns dancing and twisting across the tracks, animated by some moving light in the distance. Turning around, Frank saw the source of the illumination. The headlights of another train were approaching the station, this time hurtling down the other express track, in the opposite direction. The train was rushing straight toward them, on the very track where Miranda had fallen, and where Frank now stood by her side. Unless they moved quickly, the train was going to run right over them.

Of course, Frank thought. *It's the train they're hiding from. They're afraid of the train*. Frank's lips twisted into a sardonic grin. He had an idea.

XX.

As he stood on the tracks, the headlights of the express train grew larger and brighter before him. A loud blast sounded from the train's horn. The engineer had seen him on the track. The train was now very close.

"I love you," Frank whispered into Miranda's ear. Cradling her gently in his arms, Frank laid his wife on the ground beside the track, out of reach of the oncoming train. All around him, Frank could sense the ghouls cowering out of sight in the shadows, gnashing their teeth and shivering with rage.

Just you wait, their hollow eyes seemed to promise. *Wait until the train passes. Then you'll be ours*.

"That's what you think," Frank muttered.

Wincing with pain and near to fainting, Frank stood unsteadily on the express track. He stretched himself upright, to his full height, spread his arms wide to either side and faced the oncoming train dead on. As if from a million miles away, Frank heard the blare of the horn, the hiss of the air brakes, the shriek of wheels scraping against the rails. The engineer was trying desperately to stop. But it was too late.

With a deep sigh of contentment, Frank pondered what would come next. Certainly, he would be splattered all over the track. They'd have to clean up what was left of him with a mop. But his bones would sleep in peace. No unclean thing would ever dine on his flesh.

The train would stop. There would be screams and curses. Paramedics and transit police would fill the station. Radios would crackle with terse commands. Floodlights, forensic photographers and TV camera crews would bathe every corner of the station in light. The ghouls would slink away into their cold lairs below.

And, most important of all, Miranda would live.

A wonderful smile came to Frank's lips. He was still smiling when four hundred tons of stainless-steel rolling stock slammed into his face.

It didn't even hurt.

XXI.

"Both victims show symptoms of acute post-traumatic stress," wrote the court psychiatrist in her report. "Both have repressed all memory of the event. We may never know what happened to these people."

With that diagnosis, Frank and Miranda were released from psychiatric observation. They were both lucky to be alive. Had Miranda's body been a little better grounded when she hit the third rail, and had she touched the rail for only a split-second longer, the full 625 volts would have ripped through her body, causing her head, hands and feet to explode like rotten pumpkins. As for Frank, only the fact that the express train had slowed when it rounded a sharp bend into the station saved him from being smeared all over the front car like a fly on a windshield. Instead, the train had knocked Frank clear, leaving him with only a few broken bones and contusions.

Contrary to the psychiatrist's report, neither Frank nor Miranda suffered from repressed memories. They remembered everything perfectly, and recounted the story faithfully to the police.

"Screen memory," the doctor had explained to the detectives, tapping one forefinger against her head. "Obviously, something quite horrible did happen to them. Those bite marks on Mr. Romain's face were human. Obviously these people were attacked, perhaps by a psychopath. But Frank and Miranda Romain have blanked out all memory of these events. Their minds have constructed this dreadful fantasy of homicidal skeletons as a metaphor for the real pain and terror they underwent, but which they can't bear to remember."

When Frank and Miranda returned to their East Village apartment, they were not surprised to find that the staircase in the wall had vanished. A great hole still gaped in their kitchen wall, but now it was just an ordinary hole, with plaster and wooden studs showing through. Reality had righted itself. Whatever portal had opened on that terrible night had now swung shut. The doorway to the other world had closed.

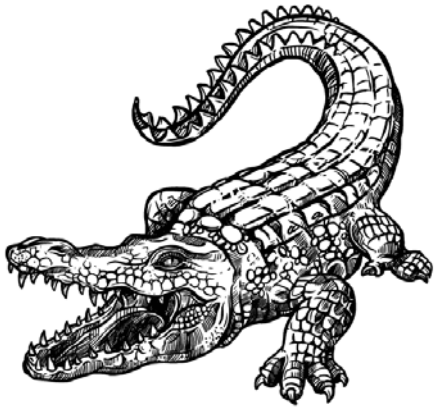
Soon after, Frank and Miranda moved out of the East Village. The old brick buildings in that neighborhood were too crumbly and ancient for their tastes, too settled into the limey substructure of the city, too close to the earth. Frank and Miranda sublet a condominium in a sleek, modern high-rise in Tribeca, deliberately choosing an apartment on the highest floor available, 33 stories above street level.

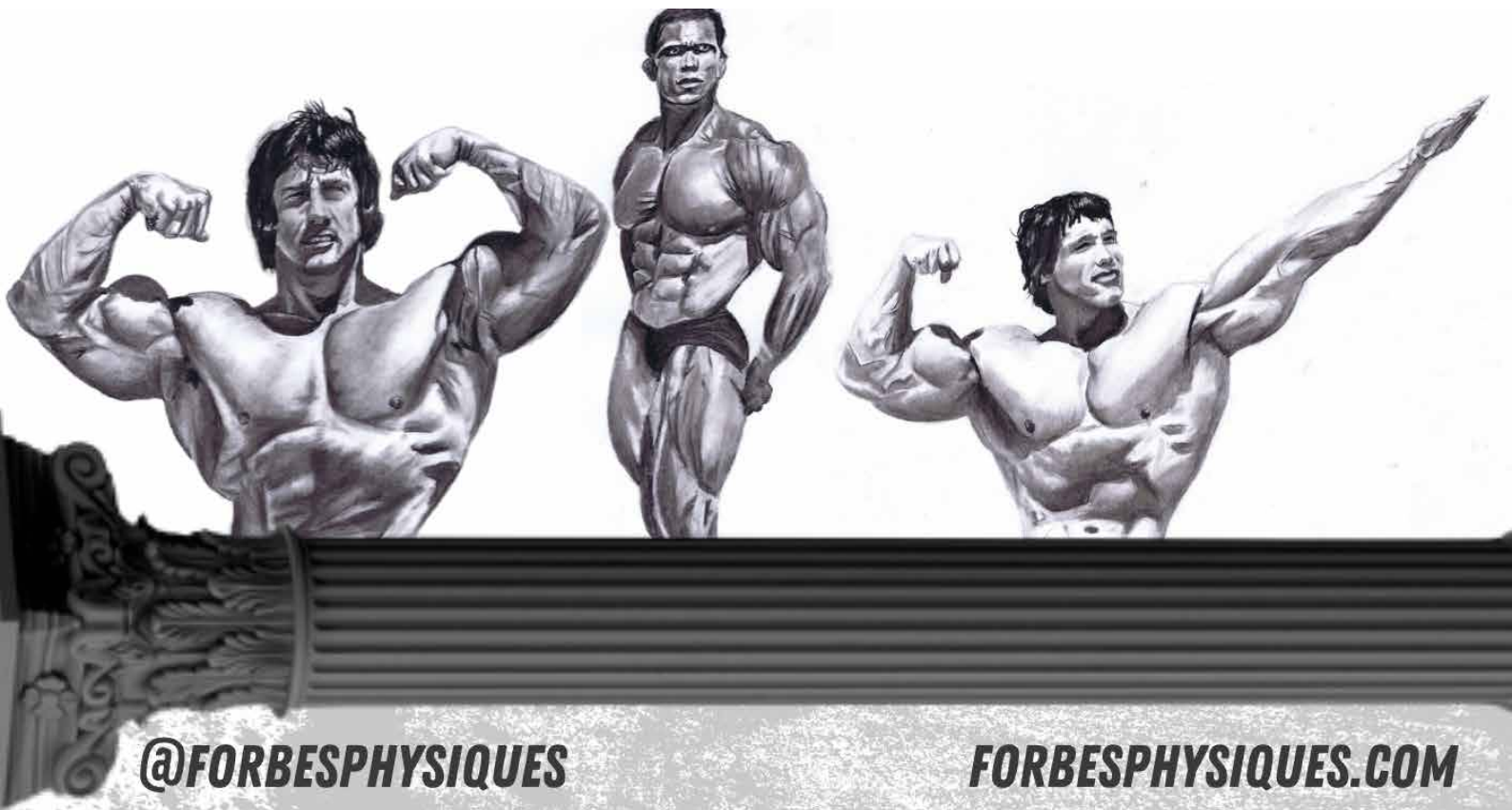
The building was new and clean, but it never seemed clean enough for Frank and Miranda. They spent each weekend scrubbing and sterilizing their apartment with caustic chemicals. They crawled along the floor, peering suspiciously into every gap beneath the molding and spraying until roach poison ran in rivulets between the floor slats. Their kitchen gleamed with formica and stainless steel. Their bathroom fixtures shone like platinum. The sharp scent of Lysol pervaded every room.

"It's not perfect," Frank would say to himself. "But it's pretty damn good."

In the mornings, sunlight streamed through the living room window, and the aroma of French roast coffee wafted from their kitchen. From their balcony, Frank and Miranda would watch the pigeons flit from their lofty rookeries. They would gaze down at the traffic, and watch tatters of newspaper tumbling in the thermal currents high above the street. At night, they would lie clenched in each other's arms, listening with desperate thankfulness to the hum of the air conditioner and the electric throb of the building's mighty innards. When they slept, every light in the apartment stayed on.

Perfect Fear, *Richard's book of short stories from which this story is taken, is available now, including from Amazon. Visit Richardpoe.com for his writings. He tweets @realrichardpoe.*





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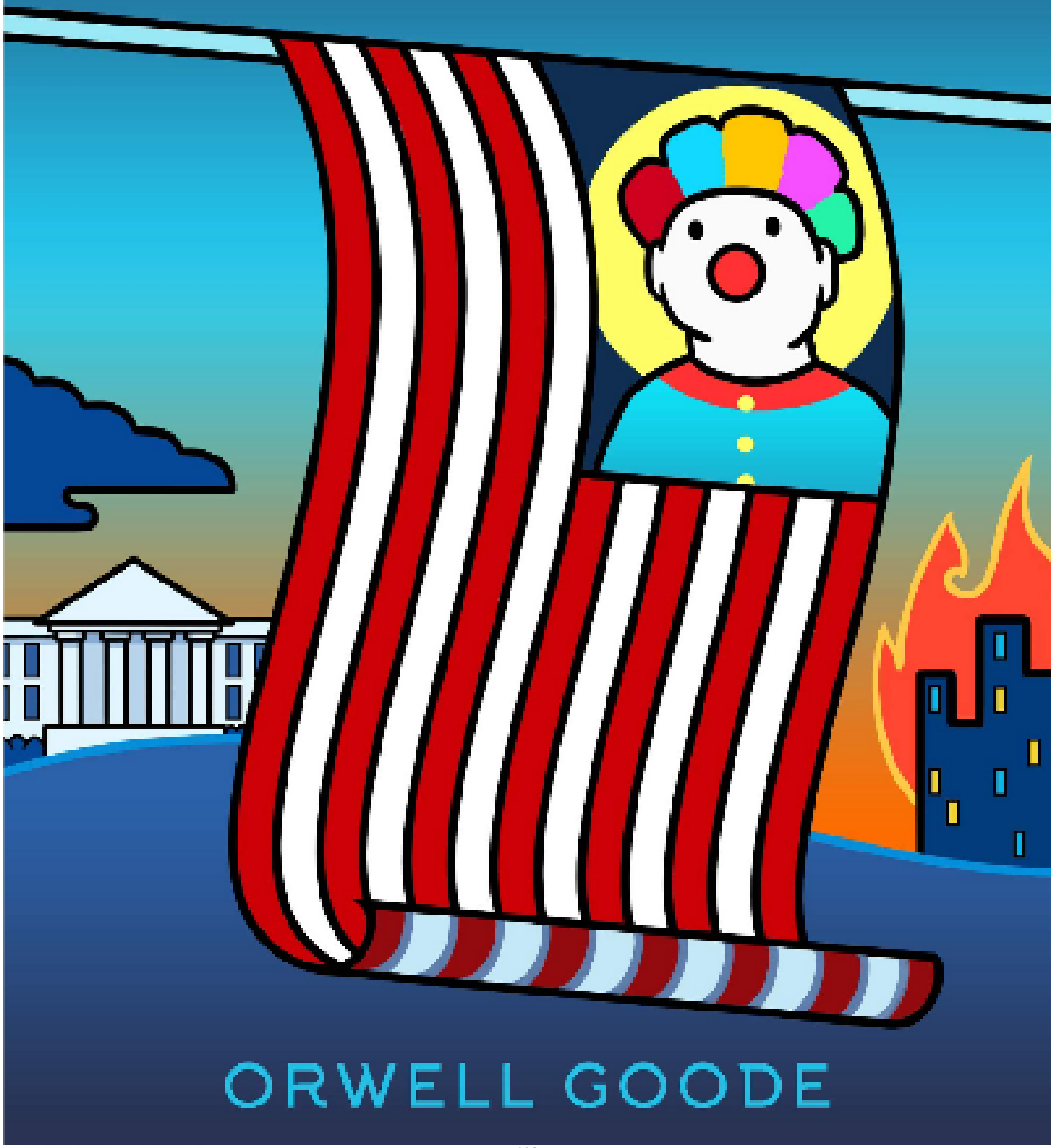
LET'S RETURN TO AESTHETICS

THE CLOWNING OF AMERICA

Woke Capital, Con Inc, and Meme Culture



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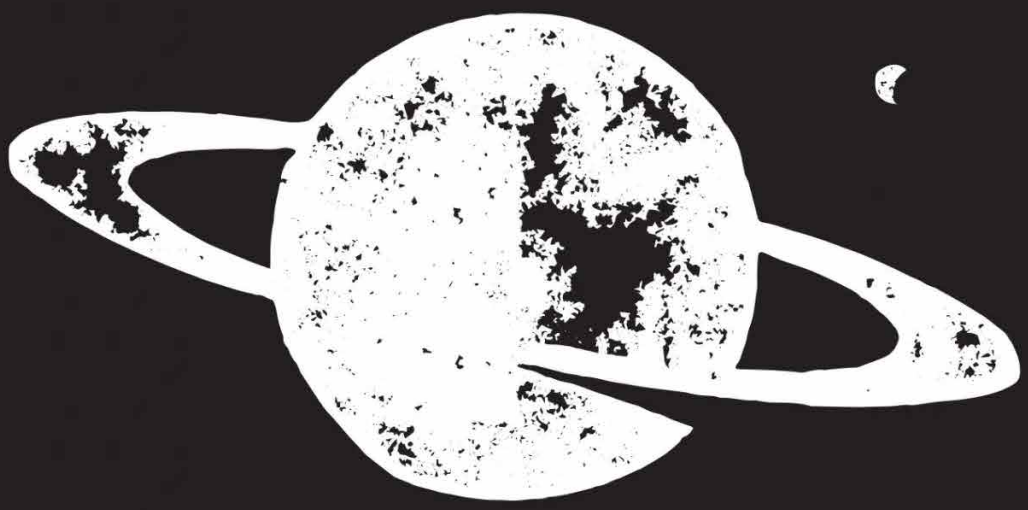
SPECTRES OF SATURN



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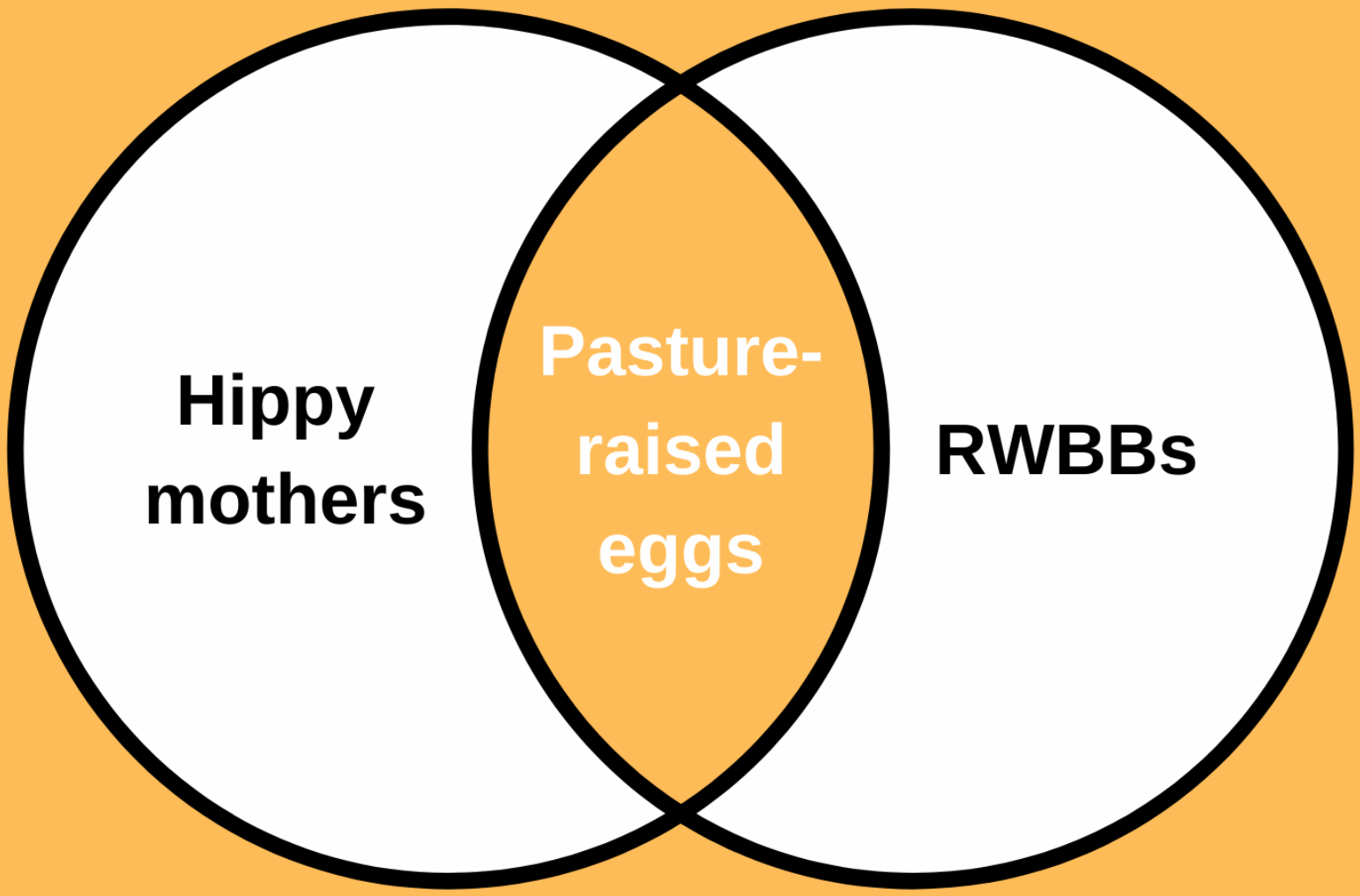

(Seriously. Only eat eggs.)

ONLY egg